OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

BY

PROF: W. H. BENNETT, D.D.

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CENTURY BIBLE HANDBOOKS

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OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

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BY

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	ENVIRONMENT	8
III.	ORIGIN OF ISRAEL—MOSES AND THE EXODUS	17
IV.	THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN: I.—JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES	35
V.	THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN: II.—SAMUEL, SAUL, AND DAVID	54
VI.	SOLOMON	82
VII.	THE DISRUPTION	88
VIII.	WARS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH	91
IX.	THE SYRIAN WARS—I. THE HOUSE OF OMRI	95
X.	THE SYRIAN WARS—II. THE HOUSE OF JEHU	107
XI.	ISRAEL UNDER THE EARLY MONARCHY	115
XII.	THE PROPHETS OF EIGHTH CENTURY, AMOS, HOSEA, ISAIAH, AND MICAH	120
XIII.	THE REFORMS OF JOSIAH	133
XIV.	THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAH	138
XV.	THE CAPTIVITY	150
XVI.	THE RESTORATION	160
XVII.	THE REFORMS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH	166
XVIII.	CONCLUSION	174
APPENDIX	I. THE RETURN FROM THE EXILE	176
,,	II. THE REFORMS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH	177
INDEX		178

THE ANCIENT WORLD
Roman Miles
English Miles
GREAT SEA
(MEDITERRANEAN SEA)
BLACK SEA
LIBYA
ARABIA
ETHIOPIA
Isles of Elisha
Javan
Tubal
Meshech
Ashkenaz
Togarmah
Cilicia
Aram
Damascus
Hamath
Lud
Moab
Edom
Midian
Dedan
Memphis or Noph
Pathros
Thebes
Berenice
Meroe
Sheba
Raamah

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PALESTINE
showing
SEATS OF THE TWELVE TRIBES
IN THE XIth CENTURY B.C.
English Miles
0 5 10 20
30'
35
36
33
30'
R. Leontes
Tyre
Janoah
Dan
Kedesh
Waters of Merom
Abdi
Hazor
BASHAN
ARAM?
Accho
Laman
Cabul
Sea of Chinnereth
Aphek
Golan
Ashtaroth Karnaim
Mt Carmel
R. Kishon
Rimmon
ZEBULON
ISSACHAR
R. Yarmuk
Mt Tabor
Tabor
Dor
Megiddo
Shunem
Ibleam
Jezreel
Taanach
Bethshean
Mt Gilboa
Jabesh Gilead
Bethulia
Dothan
MANASSEH
Tirzah
Abel-Meholah
Jordan
Samaria
Shechem
Succoth
R. Jabbok
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Tipsah
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OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of the History of Israel.—The history of the Chosen People has a supreme claim upon our interest and attention; it means more to us than the annals of Greece or Rome, or even of our own country. For more than a thousand years Israel was the sphere within which God specially made Himself known to man, in that Revelation which culminated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The attitude of God both to the human race and to the individual soul was revealed in His dealings with Israel and its citizens. The Divine requirements are set forth in the demands of the inspired teachers of the Old Testament. The Law and the Prophets, the Psalms and the Wisdom of Israel, set up moral standards which even now we do not seriously attempt to realise. In this sacred literature we also see how the soul became conscious of its fellowship

with God, and how the mutual action and reaction of the Divine Spirit with the religious experience of man were gradually understood and interpreted.

This unique religious life was constantly and closely interwoven with the history; the religion was a national religion. To use modern terms, the nation and the Church were identical; religion was a matter for the community, and for the individual as a member of the community, and on the other hand politics and social life were equally matters of religion. For the most part the inspired writers are concerned chiefly and in the first instance with Israel; the great utterances of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets were directly occasioned by the historical circumstances of their times.

Moreover, the human character of Jesus and the circumstances of His early life were the outcome of the national experience; and He and His Apostles thought and spoke in terms of the history of Israel. The Church has included the Hebrew literature in its Bible, and is largely indebted to the Old Testament for its ethics. In a word, there can be no intelligent knowledge of Christ and Christianity without an acquaintance with the annals of the Chosen People.

We must also remember that Mohammedanism starts from the Old Testament, which it accepts as a Divine Revelation.

Thus the unique glory of Israel is its importance for

religion. In population, extent of territory, political power, in art and science and commerce, it was insignificant; but it was the parent of three great world-religions, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

Sources.—Our information as to ancient Israel is mainly derived from the Old Testament. Josephus, indeed, wrote in A.D. 95 his "Antiquities of the Jews," giving an account of the period from the creation of the world to the Jewish war in A.D. 70; but until some time after the Exile, he had no trustworthy authorities except those contained in the Old Testament. Hence for the earlier history he adds little or nothing to our knowledge; he merely supplements the Biblical narrative by fanciful legends, rhetorical expansions, and more or less plausible conjectures. A mass of equally worthless material of a similar character is found in the Apocryphal and other Jewish and Christian literature of the centuries immediately before and after Christ.

We do, indeed, learn much from the monuments, inscriptions, and other ancient records of Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, and Moab. They have brought to light the world to which Israel belonged, and told us the history of the great empires which were in turn supreme; and thus indirectly they enable us to understand the circumstances and conditions of the sacred story, and to fill in the background of the picture drawn by the Bible. They also help us with the chronology,

and supply alternative versions of some of the stories; but, so far, they do not provide us with many additional facts of Hebrew history.

When we remember that, for by far the greater part of the history of ancient Israel, we have hardly any other source of information but the narrative portions of the Old Testament, it will be evident that our data are extremely meagre. Indeed, they are even less than they seem at first sight, for most of the narratives in *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Chronicles* are repetitions, often word for word, of material found in the other historical books. Deducting such repetitions, together with the legal sections of the Pentateuch, we have left very roughly 280 octavo pages. Or we may leave out *Genesis* as concerned with the patriarchs rather than the nation; and we have only about 240 pages to tell the story of some thousand years—about as much as a halfpenny daily paper gives to the events of three or four days. And, as a matter of fact, further deductions have to be made, for reasons to be stated in our next section.

The Interpretation of the Sources.—This might seem at first sight a very simple matter; it might be supposed that we have merely to reproduce the Biblical statements. Some readers will be surprised to find that this has not been done; they will miss familiar features of the sacred story; and it may seem that in places the history as given here is inconsistent with the inspired record.

But in truth the reconstruction of the history of ancient times from such documents as those contained in the Old Testament is a most difficult problem. These documents are not history, but material for history. The Bible is given us as a means of grace, to show us the way of salvation, and to move us to faith in Christ; it was not intended, in the first instance and directly, to provide us with information on other matters, especially on the details of secular history. Being thus provided for our spiritual edification, the Bible uses any form of narrative which may serve that end. There are other kinds of narratives besides scientific reports which are accurate in every detail—if any such have ever existed. There are poems, parables, and allegories. There are stories about tribes written as if they were about individuals; we read about Ephraim and his brethren, when not the patriarchs but the tribes are meant. Then, again, a writer or a preacher wishing to bring home to his contemporaries the lessons of ancient events may tell the story as if it had happened in his own time, in terms of the customs and circumstances with which he and his hearers are familiar. He may speak of the Prodigal Son squandering bank-notes. Much of *Chronicles* has been written on that principle.

In fact, almost every possible form of narrative is used in the Old Testament, and the student has to determine the character of each; it is, as we have said, no easy task.

It is obviously impossible in this little handbook to give reasons; one can only state conclusions. Moreover, in view of the meagre data, the obscurity of numerous passages, and the contradictions—or at any rate the *primâ facie* contradictions—in many of the parallel passages; in view of all these difficulties, we must be more or less uncertain about many details. For the sake of clearness and brevity we have often omitted qualifications; we have for the most part avoided "probably" and "possibly"; but the reader will understand that our version of the story is not put forward dogmatically as absolutely certain throughout. In minor matters it is one among several possible versions: but for all the views held there is respectable evidence and strong authority. The main lines of the history are practically certain, so far as our present information is concerned; and on these more important matters there is something like a consensus of opinion amongst scholars who hold moderate modern views.

The history of the Literature and Religion of Israel are only dealt with briefly; for further information on these subjects, including the historical documents of which we have been speaking, the reader is referred to two other volumes of this series, "The Books of the Old Testament" by Professor Whitehouse, and "The Religion of Israel" by Professor Peake. Similarly, many of our statements rest upon an examination of

the text and interpretation of the relevant passages—an examination far too lengthy and elaborate to be reproduced in an elementary handbook. The full treatment of such matters may be seen in such works as the "International Critical Commentary," and Professor H. P. Smith's "Old Testament History" in the "International Theological Library." A good general idea of these discussions may be obtained from the notes in the "Century Bible."

CHAPTER II

ENVIRONMENT

Geography of the Ancient East.—The history of ancient Israel is concerned mainly with Assyria, Babylonia, Syria, and Egypt; and in a less degree with the neighbouring countries, Media, Persia, Elam, Arabia, and Ethiopia. Most of the events took place within an area contained by the following boundaries: the east and south-east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, a line drawn from the north-east corner of the Mediterranean to the mouth of the Araxes on the west coast of the Caspian, the coast of the Caspian, a line drawn from the south-east corner of the Caspian to the head of the Persian Gulf, a line from the head of the Persian Gulf to the head of the Gulf of Elath, the coast of the Red Sea, from there round the Peninsula of Sinai and then southward about halfway down the Red Sea, a line from this point westward, and finally the desert to the west of Egypt (see Map of the Ancient East). To-day this area is included in Egypt, Turkey in Asia, and Persia.

The most striking features of this area are:—

(i.) The two great river systems; on the one hand the Euphrates and the Tigris and their tributaries, with vast plains rendered fertile in ancient times by irrigation, and on the other the Nile, with the lands about it, like a fan with a long handle, the handle being a narrow strip of cultivated soil shut in by mountains, and the extended portion of the fan being the Delta, a triangle traversed by numerous arms into which the Nile divides. These lands are fertilised by the annual inundations of the Nile.

(ii.) A strip of highlands and mountains, extending from the north-east corner of the Mediterranean to the Peninsula of Sinai; interrupted at intervals by valleys and plains, sometimes fertile, sometimes desert.

(iii.) The maritime plain along the Mediterranean, sometimes extremely narrow, sometimes extending for a considerable distance inland.

(iv.) A great triangular wedge of desert, separating Syria from Mesopotamia and Babylonia.

The International System.—These countries were the seat of two ancient civilisations, which had reached an advanced stage of art, science, political and social organisation, and religion, before Israel appeared upon the scene. The Egyptian monarchy can be traced back to about 5000 B.C., and the beginnings of civilisation in the Nile Valley are thousands of years earlier. The civilisation of the lands about the Euphrates and the Tigris is not much less ancient. The earliest people

whom we can trace in these countries are the Sumerians; later on Semitic invaders established themselves in the land and became the ruling race. As early as 4000 B.C. powerful city-states already existed, and in the period from 4500 B.C. to 2500 B.C. various Semitic kingdoms rose and fell. About B.C. 2100, the Babylonian Empire began to flourish under what is called the First Babylonian Dynasty. The greatest king of this dynasty was Hammurabi, identified with Amraphel the contemporary of Abraham (Gen. xiv.). Hammurabi made Babylon supreme in Western Asia.

Less is known of the early history of Assyria, but a Semitic monarchy existed there about 3000 B.C. Nineveh was already a flourishing city in the time of Hammurabi. For many centuries Assyria was a province or dependency of Babylon, but in time the more northerly state asserted its independence, and became first the rival and then the mistress of Babylonia.

The settled lands of Syria were for the most part parcelled out amongst a number of small city-states, while numerous nomad tribes roamed over the pasture-lands and the desert. Amongst the cities the most important were the Phœnician ports and Damascus. A belt of Phœnician cities were dotted along the Mediterranean coast from Tyre northwards, and most of the maritime commerce of South-west Asia was in the hands of their merchants. The Phœnicians were

Canaanites who had given up agriculture and taken to trade. We do not know the date at which they settled on the coast, but Tyre and Sidon were already flourishing in the fifteenth century B.C.

In addition to the greater empires, the Syrian cities, and the nomads, there were various minor states, some of which rose to temporary importance. They were sometimes independent, but mostly subject to Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon: they continually varied in number and extent of territory.

The area we have defined was frequently invaded by neighbours outside its boundaries. Great waves of immigrants from Arabia repeatedly swept over Syria and Babylonia, introduced new elements into the population, and changed the character of society. In Northern Syria we find between 1600 and 800 B.C. a Hittite Empire or Confederation, controlling much of Asia Minor and contending on equal terms with Egypt for the supremacy of Syria.

The nations of our area—which we may speak of, for the sake of simplicity, as Western Asia and Egypt—formed an international system, and were as closely connected as the peoples of Western Europe before the advent of railways, steamships, and telegraphs. The dominant races in Western Asia were Semitic; Egypt was ruled for centuries by a Semitic dynasty, and there was a Semitic element in the population. There was a

vigorous commerce between the different countries, and their inhabitants were brought into contact with one another by frequent wars. The governments maintained diplomatic relations with one another, and the royal families intermarried. There was one special feature of ancient life which tended to draw the nations together and give them a mutual knowledge of each other. In every country there were numbers of foreign slaves, of whom a considerable proportion either escaped or were ransomed. A Syrian lady, for instance, could learn all about the Israelites from her Jewish maid.

More especially Assyria and Babylon were very similar in race, language, and religion, and they were closely connected politically, so that when we speak of one only it may be generally understood that the other is included.

All these ancient peoples were deeply and universally religious; they were conscious of invisible Powers behind Nature and life, behind experience and history; and this consciousness led them to believe in an immense number of supernatural beings of all kinds, gods and demons, good and evil, great and small, with every possible variety of function. But practically a family, a city, or a nation often became attached to some one deity, who took a special interest in its welfare—a kind of patron saint. Naturally a people thought highly of its own particular god, and if a city became prosperous

and powerful, its deity would be extolled as mighty and beneficent beyond all others. About 1400 B.C. an Egyptian king, Khuenaten, became a believer in the Sun-god as the supreme sole deity, and tried to make monotheism the religion of Egypt. But the new movement entirely collapsed at his death.

The two chief centres of influence for Western Asia were Egypt and Babylonia; sometimes the Pharaohs, sometimes the dominant power on the Euphrates, held sway over Syria for centuries. Of the two, Babylonia, and especially the city of Babylon, was the more important. Babylon in the ancient East held a position similar to that of Rome in Western Europe in the Middle Ages or to that of Paris to-day. For example, in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries, and doubtless at other times, Babylonian was the language of diplomacy, in which despatches were written by the governments of Egypt, Syria, and Cappadocia.

The Geography of Palestine (see Map of Palestine).—Palestine may be very roughly described as consisting of four parallel strips of country.

(*a*) A section of the maritime plain referred to as iii. on page 9, and immediately eastwards.

(*b*) A section of the Highlands referred to as ii. on the same page. This hill country is interrupted to the south-west of the Sea of Galilee by the Plain of Esdraelon. In the southern half of Palestine, between the moun-

tains and the plain, there is a district of low hills, the Shephelah, the "lowland" of the Revised Version.

(*c*) The valley of the Jordan.

(*d*) The high table-land to the east of the Jordan.

In the south, the Highlands drop into a lower district, still considerably above the sea-level, partly desert, partly poor pasture-land, the Negeb or "south country."

On three sides Palestine has well-defined boundaries, the Mediterranean on the west, the desert on the south and east. To the north there is no natural boundary. But the Israelite dominion hardly ever extended over all Palestine: most of the maritime plain was usually held by the Philistines and the Phœnicians; and the country east of the Dead Sea, and southwards generally, belonged to Edom and Moab.

Palestine is a very small country; its length from Dan to Beersheba is about one hundred and eighty miles, the breadth from Jordan to the sea is rarely more than fifty miles. The Israelite frontier, east of the Jordan, was very indefinite, and continually varied. We might reckon a breadth of from about twenty miles to possibly fifty in Bashan. On the one hand, however, the dominion of Israelite kings was sometimes more extensive; but, on the other, as we have seen, there was never a time when the whole of this territory was effectively occupied by an Israelite population. In

view of the uncertainty of the frontier, we can hardly give exact figures for the area of Palestine, but according to Professor Socin in the article "Palestine" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, the area of Western Palestine is 6040 square miles, while 3800 square miles would be a liberal estimate for Eastern Palestine. The whole is less than a sixth of England.

The surface of the country is very varied; the elevation ranges from nearly 10,000 feet *above* the sea-level on the summit of Hermon, to more than 1000 feet *below* the sea level on the shores of the Dead Sea. Hence the climate is very different in different districts, and the kinds of vegetable produce are very numerous. Much of the land is only fit for pasture, and large numbers of sheep and cattle were reared, especially in the districts bordering on the southern and eastern deserts. In some districts, especially on the slopes of the lower hills, the vine, the fig, and the olive flourished. Wheat and barley were staple products of Palestine, growing abundantly in the plains. The country is not rich in minerals.

As regards commerce, there are no good sea-ports south of Carmel, and the maritime trade was mostly in the hands of the Phœnicians. But the most important caravan routes from Syria and Mesopotamia to Egypt passed either through Palestine or along its borders.

Early History of Palestine.—When Israel appeared upon the scene Palestine already enjoyed a civilisation which, like that of Egypt and Babylon, had been developing for thousands of years. It had been overrun by successive waves of immigrants, mostly Semites from Arabia. At the time of the Israelite conquest the ruling race were the Canaanites, to whom the Phœnicians belonged. As far as we are acquainted with the internal politics of the country, it was mainly organised in small states consisting of cities, or groups of cities, and their territory, together with a nomad population, forming small tribes. The number and extent of these states continually varied, and they were often federated in all sorts of combinations.

But the culture of the country was largely determined by the great empires upon which it was usually dependent. Palestine was the bone of contention between Egypt and its eastern rivals, and often the battle-ground on which they fought out their quarrels—the Flanders of the ancient East. Before 1800 B.C. there were periods when Elam or Babylonia was dominant in Syria and Palestine; and from about 1700 to 1200 B.C. Palestine was mostly tributary to the Pharaohs, and some of its towns were occupied by their garrisons. The Egyptians held the Sinaitic Peninsula, and worked its mines from the very earliest times, perhaps as early as 4000 B.C.

CHAPTER III

ORIGIN OF ISRAEL—MOSES AND THE EXODUS

The Pentateuch

The Genealogy of Israel.—Israel first appears as a nation at the Exodus. It is then described as a confederacy of twelve tribes, descended from the twelve sons of Jacob or Israel. But in the ancient East genealogies with their various features, parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, were used to set forth the political, geographical, and racial relations of tribes and districts. Thus series of dry details were transformed into romantic stories, and history became picturesque and easy to remember. We still use similar figures; England is the mother country and the colonies her daughters. Thus the only certain meaning of the statement that the twelve tribes were the sons of Israel, is that these tribes ultimately formed a nation called Israel; it also meant other things, but it is difficult to discover these other meanings.

Many of the narratives in *Genesis* are as much tribal history as the genealogies with which they are interwoven, and these passages contain the remnants of the

Israelites' traditions as to the way in which the Confederacy of the Twelve Tribes gradually grew up. The names of the Patriarchs and their wives are chiefly names of tribes; the various marriages and births stand for alliances and combinations of independent tribes, and for the subdivision of a large tribe into smaller clans. Personal narratives have been blended with this tribal history. We cannot say now exactly how much belongs to each class of material; but many scholars hold that Abraham, at any rate, was a person and not merely a tribe; and that the adventures of Joseph have a basis in actual facts of personal experience, though their hero may have been the patron saint, so to speak, rather than the ancestor of the tribe.

We cannot now decide with certainty what was the original tradition as to the tribal history which led up to the Confederacy of the Twelve Tribes. Some points however, are clear.

Genesis x., xi. trace the descent of Israel and many other nations to Shem; or, in other words, they regard them as more closely connected with each other than with the rest of the world. Amongst these "sons of Shem" are the Assyrians, Syrians or Aramæans, and numerous Arab tribes, besides the ancestors of Israel. All our information supports the statement that the main stock of the Assyrians, Aramæans, Arabs, and Israelites were cognate peoples and spoke cognate

tongues; hence we speak of Semitic races and languages. The Babylonians must be included with the Assyrians.

On the other hand Mizraim, *i.e.* Egypt and Canaan, are assigned to another group of nations, "the sons of Ham." This statement, however, merely means that in ancient times Canaan was a province of Egypt. Canaan had a very mixed population, but its language, which chiefly survives in fragments of Phœnician, was Semitic; and probably the most important elements in the population were Semitic.

Thus Israel was closely allied in race and language with Assyria, Babylon, the Syrians, Canaanites and Arabs.

According to Genesis xi. 28, Abram, Lot, and Nahor have a common ancestor, Terah; later on Abram (or Abraham) is the father of Isaac and of Ishmael, and of numerous sons by Keturah (chap. xxv. 1 ff.). Ishmael and the sons of Keturah are the ancestors of Arab tribes. Lot is the father of Moab and Ammon. Nahor is the ancestor of Aramæan tribes. Isaac is the father of Jacob and Esau or Edom.

Terah lived originally in "Ur of the Chaldees," but migrated thence with Abram and Lot to Haran. Later on Abram and Lot migrated thence to Canaan. Nahor is not included in this migration, but his son Bethuel is at Haran in Gen. xxviii. 2.

So far the tradition is clear. The original home of

the ancestors of Israel was Southern Babylonia, the district of Ur of the Chaldees. These ancestors took part in a great migration north-west of Mesopotamia, about Haran. Later on they and other kindred tribes moved south-west into Palestine; while another migration, the Aramæans, followed them to Haran. There is, however, reason to suppose that the original starting-point of both these migrations was Arabia.

The later stages of the history are more confused, because these parts of *Genesis* are a combination of divergent traditions, but the course of events seems to have been somewhat as follows. On the arrival in Palestine the confederacy divided into two main groups: one of these, either Abraham or under the leadership of Abraham, passed over into Western Palestine, while the other, Lot, Moab, and Ammon, settled east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Abraham, again, or his followers, again divided into two or three groups, Isaac on the one hand, and various tribes which returned to North-west Arabia on the other. Next Edom broke off and settled to the south and east of the Dead Sea, leaving Jacob as the ancestor of Israel.

We do not profess to be able to give a satisfactory explanation of the wanderings and the family history of Jacob or Israel. But we gather from them that a branch of the Israelite confederacy as it then existed returned to Mesopotamia, to Haran, and allied itself with

Aramæan tribes, and afterwards returned westward in company with their new allies and rejoined their kinsfolk in Palestine. Henceforth Israel included an Aramæan element: thus in Deut. xxvi. 5 the ritual words to be used by an Israelite offering first-fruits are, "A Syrian," *i.e.* Aramæan, "ready to perish was my father."

The life of the Patriarchs as it is described in *Genesis* gives us the traditional Israelite picture of the condition of their forefathers before the Bondage, the Exodus, and the Conquest. They were nomad tribes, pasturing their flocks from the frontier lands of Egypt to the north of Palestine. They were closely akin to the tribes settled to the south-east of that country, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and various Arab or Bedouin nomads; and also to the Aramæans or Syrians of the north-east.

Religion of Israel during the Nomad Period.—*Genesis* tells us very little on this subject; it does not even tell us expressly that Abraham, for instance, worshipped only one God, still less that he believed that only one God existed. Joshua xxiv. 14, 15 refers to the gods which the ancestors of Israel worshipped when they dwelt beyond the Euphrates, and Gen. xxxv. 2 to "the strange gods" belonging to Jacob's followers, and we know that from the Exodus to the Captivity the Israelites divided their allegiance between Yahweh and other deities.

Hence we naturally conclude that during the nomad period there was a measure of polytheism amongst the Israelites, and that their religion had much in common with that of kindred Bedouin tribes. Sacrifice was the prominent feature of worship.

On the other hand, each tribe had some one deity to whom it was specially attached, and any close alliance of tribes would be placed under the patronage of a god, often the god of the leading member of the confederacy. Thus we may accept the impression conveyed by *Genesis*, that the leaders of the nomad Israelites were specially interested in one God, and that for practical purposes their religion for the most part consisted of their relations to Him.

Doubtless, too, in this period God gave to Israel a measure of revelation to prepare the way for the work of Moses; speaking then as He spoke later by inspired teachers or prophets. Many modern scholars regard Abraham as one of these. We are not, however, at present in a position to say in what the religion of Israel at this time differed from that of neighbouring kindred tribes.

Here and elsewhere we deal very briefly with the religious history of Israel, because it is the subject of another volume of this series.

The Bondage in Egypt.—Nomad tribes wandering in and about Palestine would, in the natural course of

things, visit the frontier districts of Egypt to the east of the Delta. We know from the Egyptian inscriptions that the Bedouin frequently paid such visits, either as peaceful traders, or to pasture their flocks, or on plundering expeditions. According to Gen. xii. 10, xxi. 21, Abram went down into Egypt, and Ishmael married an Egyptian wife.

Eventually certain Israelite tribes were permitted to pasture their flocks in the north-east district of Egypt, Goshen; they seem to have become comparatively settled there, without altogether abandoning the nomad life. The evidence of the monuments, combined with certain features of the Bible story, render it probable that only a portion of the Israelites settled thus; others remained in Palestine. There was more than one migration to Egypt; first Joseph, then other kindred clans.

At first these nomad guests met with a friendly reception, and enjoyed the favour of the Egyptian authorities; but as time went on their attitude changed, possibly through a change of dynasty. From about 2100–1600 B.C. Egypt was ruled by the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings, Asiatics and possibly Semites. It may have been towards the close of this dynasty that the Israelite tribes were encouraged to settle on the Egyptian frontier. When the Hyksos were expelled, and Egypt was again ruled by a native dynasty, the new kings would naturally be suspicious of the *protégés* of the foreign oppressors.

But even if this theory is not correct, powerful tribes occupying the north-west frontier were obviously a danger to Egypt. The numbers of the Israelites increased, partly through new accessions from the north and east; at any moment they might be joined by their kinsfolk from Syria and Arabia; and Joseph might prove to be the advance guard of Bedouin hordes who would sweep over Egypt, and again subject the land to foreign rule.

Hitherto the Israelites had been virtually independent, but now the Pharaohs sought to bring them into entire subjection to the Egyptian government. Ancient Eastern monarchs sought to perpetuate the memory of their greatness by splendid buildings; and these were chiefly erected by the forced labour of their poorer subjects, and especially of dependent races. Thus the services of the Israelites were requisitioned to erect "store-cities," Pithom and Raamses, fortified arsenals, magazines and depôts, to serve as bases for the defence of the north-west frontier. From being a menace, the Israelites were to contribute to the security of Egypt. Such labourers were harshly treated; the monuments depict them engaged in heavy toil under the rod of their overseers. Mighty kings sacrificed lives recklessly in carrying out their enterprises, especially when the victims were obnoxious foreigners; so that the new policy was eminently calculated to break the spirits, diminish the numbers, and destroy the power of the Israelites. They, on their part, hitherto

free children of the desert, bitterly resented the humiliation, drudgery, and cruelty to which they were subjected. Their lack of docility provoked greater severity; but matters seem for a while to have been at a deadlock: the Israelites were not strong enough to assert their independence, and yet the Egyptians could not readily find means to reduce them to harmless insignificance. The two parties regarded each other with mutual dislike, distrust, and fear. Such a situation inevitably led to acts of cruelty and treachery, such as an attempt to destroy the new-born Israelite children.

Moses.—At this crisis God raised up Moses, one of those outstanding personalities whose appearance makes an epoch in history. According to ancient Israelite tradition preserved in the Pentateuch, he was brought up at the Egyptian court. His name may be Egyptian, and the inscriptions show that noble youths belonging to tributary peoples were sometimes educated thus, partly as hostages, partly that when they returned home they might promote loyalty amongst their fellow countrymen. But the feud between Egypt and Israel compelled Moses to choose between the two, and he cast in his lot with his own people. At once he was a marked man; it was impossible for him to remain in the land; he fled into the deserts to the north-east; and, like many other refugees from Egypt, sought an asylum with the Bedouin.

Yahweh.—The Divine Providence led Moses to a district to the south or south-east of Palestine, variously known as Sinai or Horeb, where there was a celebrated sanctuary of a deity known as Yahweh.[1] There he fell in with the Midianites; was hospitably entertained by the Priest of Midian, probably a priest of Yahweh; and married his daughter. Midian was a tribe akin to Israel, and was reckoned in the genealogies as a son of Abraham.

We know little either about the earlier history of Yahweh or about His attributes at this time. His special seat was at Sinai, and His main following was doubtless amongst the nomads who frequented that district; but it is quite possible that He was also worshipped amongst other peoples and at other sanctuaries; or, again, Yahweh may have been a title or epithet of some god known elsewhere under other names. There is much to suggest that He was often thought of as the god of the thunderstorm and the hurricane.

The Call of Moses.—The critical decision to leave Pharaoh's court would naturally be taken in early manhood. At this impressionable age, Moses exchanged the elaborate and luxurious civilisation of Egypt for the

[1] Strictly speaking we are only quite certain of the consonants YHWH; but Yahweh is the pronunciation most generally adopted. The English form *Jehovah* is due to a mediæval blunder; the Hebrew Divine Name was never so pronounced.

primitive life of the desert and the desolate grandeur of the Sacred Mountains. The court page became an Arab shepherd. He had made a great sacrifice for his people, and had returned to their old homes and their ancient manner of life. When such experiences befall men of noble character and ardent temperament, the soul is quickened to the supreme acts of faith which grasp eternal truths, and the will is determined to further heroic resolutions. So in these days God met him, and he recognised the Presence in which he stood. God came to him as Yahweh, of whose name and might he had heard much during his sojourn in Midian; and the purpose of His coming was to send Moses to realise the dreams of his life by delivering his brethren, in the confidence that henceforth Yahweh was the Champion of Israel.

The Exodus.—Thus Moses, the prophet of a new faith, in an ecstasy of religious enthusiasm, betook himself to Egypt, announced himself to his brethren as a heaven-sent deliverer, bearded Pharaoh, and demanded freedom for Israel in the name of Yahweh. In the East, then as now, a prophet had to be taken seriously; yet the king hardened his heart at first against Moses' appeal. But that spring the natural plagues with which Egypt is periodically infested set in with unusual severity; Egyptian and Israelite alike saw in these troubles the hand of Yahweh; and at last the king yielded.

The Israelite clans set off for Syria, but they were not allowed to depart unmolested. The king recovered from his fear of Yahweh; perhaps the admonitions of the court chaplains restored his faith in the gods of Egypt. An army was sent in pursuit of the fugitives, and succeeded in hemming them in on the shore of an arm of the Red Sea. Again Yahweh interposed on behalf of Israel. "Yahweh drove the sea back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land . . . and the Israelites went into the midst of the sea on dry land." The Egyptian chariots followed, but their wheels were clogged in the heavy ground; they felt that Yahweh was fighting against them, and they turned to flee. As the wind sunk, the water returned, and the Egyptians suffered heavy loss; while all the Israelites got safe across.[1] Henceforth we do not hear of any further danger to them from their former oppressors.

Sinai.—We cannot fix with any certainty the route of the Israelites after their escape. Somewhat later we find them encamped for a considerable period at a Sacred Mountain, *i.e.* a sanctuary of Yahweh, variously called Sinai or Horeb;[2] and again at Kadesh-barnea[3]

[1] Exod. xiv. 21, 22, 25, 27, mostly from the portions of the narrative taken from the oldest source of the Pentateuch. *Cf.* Professor Whitehouse's volume in this series on "The Books of the Old Testament."

[2] Exod. xix. 1 and onwards. [3] Num. xiii. 26; Deut. i. 46.

in the desert just south of Palestine. Evidently various traditions have been preserved as to the Israelite head-quarters in this period; but it is not clear whether the difference is as to the place, or merely as to its name; that is to say, whether Sinai or Horeb are names for the same mountain in the neighbourhood of Kadesh, or whether Sinai and Horeb are places quite distinct from Kadesh and possibly from each other. Kadesh, it must be remembered, means "Sanctuary."

Without attempting, therefore, to solve the geographical problem, we may content ourselves with noting that the Israelites made their way to the Sanctuary of Yahweh where Moses had received his call, and that for many years this remained their head-quarters. We must not, however, think of them as settled all together in one place during this period; they resumed the nomad life which had been only partially interrupted during their stay in Egypt. In this district they found kindred tribes, some of which had been confederated with them before their sojourn in Egypt, and may even then have shared with them the name Bnê Israel, but had not accompanied them in their migration. The worship of Yahweh was already known among these tribes.

The religious fervour of Moses and his followers communicated itself to some of their kinsfolk and former allies; and under its influence a new confederacy was formed. The Head, Guarantor, so to speak, and Bond

of this union was Yahweh. Its constitution was a common allegiance to Him, and to Moses as His prophet, and mutual loyalty to each other. The allies became the people of Yahweh by a solemn covenant.

This act was the formation of the Israelite nation; the name Israel was older, but now for the first time we have an organised group of tribes bearing that name and continuously connected with the Israel of later days. Some of the tribes dropped out again, fresh members were added to the alliance, and other changes took place; but there was always a confederate people of Yahweh.

The relation of Yahweh to Israel was similar to that of other tribal deities to their peoples; similar, for instance, to that of Chemosh to Moab—the people and the deity formed an organic unity. But there were also important differences. Yahweh had chosen Israel to be His people; He had intervened on their behalf as the champion of the weak against the strong, of the oppressed against the oppressor; He was not merely the deity of a single tribe, but the rallying-point of a confederacy. His name and His worship stood for free, spontaneous Divine grace; for justice to the oppressed, and succour for the needy; and for loyalty, co-operation, and peace amongst allies. Here were the beginnings of the unique moral and spiritual development of the religion of Israel.

This new departure had its influence on the forms of worship and social customs of Israel. Moses, as the Prophet of Yahweh, declared to the people His will in such matters. But we cannot now determine exactly what laws and legal precedents were due to him; later tradition made him the author of all ancient ordinances, and even laws known to be new were regarded as a development of Mosaic principles and thus having his authority, just as many things are regarded as "Christian," with regard to which Christ said nothing, *e.g.* the observance of Sunday. The legislation in the Pentateuch belongs to many periods of Israelite and Jewish history. Some customs and rites older than the Exodus, and others instituted at this time, may claim the direct sanction and authority of Moses; but we have not space to attempt to say which they are.

To speak of Yahweh as the bond and rallying-point implies a common sanctuary and other sacred objects. It is possible that for a time the ancient sanctuary of Kadesh served this purpose, but eventually the Israelites erected a Sacred Tent, "the Tent of Meeting," something much simpler than the elaborate Tabernacle described in the latest section of the Pentateuch, largely from recollections of Solomon's Temple.

The Ark or Sacred Chest was as old or older than Moses. The Ark and the Tent of Meeting symbolised

the presence of Yahweh with Israel, when they left His permanent home at Sinai or Kadesh.

The Wanderings.—The marchings, countermarchings, and encampments of a group of nomad tribes cannot be set forth in a single consecutive history, and the Pentateuch makes no attempt to give us such a history. But two main points may be gathered from the anecdotes preserved by tradition.

Israel was involved in quarrels with other tribes occupying the deserts and pasture-lands to the south of Palestine, notably with the Amalekites. Also the new confederacy, or more probably some members of it, made an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate into Palestine from the south; we shall return to this in the next chapter.

Also Moses' authority over Israel was frequently challenged, and was only maintained with great difficulty; the Israelites constantly "murmured." Ambitious sheikhs at the heads of the several tribes were jealous of the new prophet, and tried to supplant him; and representatives of old tribal cults resented the claim of Yahweh to be the supreme God of Israel. Even Aaron, who according to late tradition was the brother of Moses and the Priest of Yahweh, caballed against him. Nevertheless Moses held his own.

The Death of Moses.—After a time the hostility of the neighbouring tribes forced Moses and his

followers to leave the district of Kadesh and move eastwards. They skirted the land of Edom, thus marching to the south and east of the Dead Sea, and finally established themselves in the Plains of Moab.[1] There Moses died.

The very importance of Moses makes it impossible to discover his character as a man; the devout reverence of Israel made him an ideal figure, the incarnation of all that was good and great—so much so that some scholars have mistakenly doubted whether there ever was such a man, whether he was anything but an ideal figure. All that we can say is that he was a great personality, supremely endowed with Divine grace and inspired with Divine wisdom, raised up by God to guide Israel safely through a crisis in the history of Revelation.

Chronology.—In spite of the confidence with which various scholars advocate their pet theories, we are not yet in a position to fix with certainty the dates of any of the events in the history of Israel in this period; but we may mention one or two of the leading views on the subject. Abraham and Amraphel are mentioned as contemporaries in Gen. xiv., and Amraphel is usually identified with Hammurabi. This might seem to fix the date of Abraham; but Assyriologists are not yet agreed as to the date of Hammurabi; and

[1] Their conquests at this time will be dealt with in the next chapter.

some scholars doubt whether the Abraham episodes in Gen. xiv. are historical.

In Exod. i. and ii. we are told that the Israelites during the Oppression built Pithom, and Egyptian inscriptions show that building operations were carried on there during the reign of Rameses II., about 1300–1234 B.C. Hence it is often stated that Rameses II. was the Pharaoh of the Oppression, and his son Merenptah, about 1234–1214 B.C., the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Such views, however, cannot be reconciled with some of the chronological statements in the Old Testament, or with various items of evidence derived from Egyptian and Assyrian monuments. Other dates from 1491 B.C. to 1200 B.C. or later have been held.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN: I.—JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

JOSHUA, JUDGES

Early Settlements.— In order that we may consider the whole process of the Israelite settlement in Canaan, we must retrace our steps somewhat. The Conquest was long and complicated; it began before the time of Moses, and was only completed by David. It was carried out in divers portions and in divers manners, sometimes by national migrations and pitched battles; sometimes by clan raids on a small scale; sometimes by peaceful alliances, or by agreements extorted by threats.

Going back to the beginnings of our history we may remind ourselves that the great wave of emigration which carried Abraham and Lot from Ur and Haran broke up when it reached Canaan, and Edom and Moab settled down to agricultural life. As time went on other tribes, practically Israelite, followed their example. These, together with some of the nomad clans of the same group, remained in Palestine when the rest went

down into Egypt. Certain inscriptions seem to imply that, if we accept Rameses II. as the Pharaoh of the Exodus, there were Israelite tribes in Palestine during the period of the Sojourn in Egypt. A careful examination of the Biblical narratives seems to indicate that the Israelites preserved vague traditions to the same effect.

In an inscription of Thothmes III., about 1481–1409 B.C., we find *Joseph-el* and *Jacob-el* as names of towns in Palestine. In the Amarna tablets, about 1400 B.C., we find Palestine invaded by certain *Khabiri*, whom some scholars identify with the Hebrews. In inscriptions of Seti I., and of Rameses II., the so-called Pharaoh of the Oppression, Asher is found as the name of the district afterwards occupied by the tribe of Asher. Finally Merenptah, the so-called Pharaoh of the Exodus, claims in an inscription that he subdued Israel in Palestine. There is a measure of doubt as to the contents, especially the names, and the translation of some of these inscriptions, but the available evidence points to Israelite settlements in Western Palestine before the Exodus.

The Conquest of Eastern Palestine.—It is quite possible that Israelite clans, either as nomads or leading a settled life, were to be found in Eastern Palestine from a date even before the Sojourn in Egypt; but the supremacy of Israel in these lands was due to the

arrival of Moses and his followers, after the Wanderings. Earlier the ruling races had been Moab and Ammon; but not long before these peoples had been driven eastwards by the Amorite or Canaanite king, Sihon (Num. xxi. 26–30). Moab and Ammon not improbably invited Israel to aid them in recovering their lost territories. But when the Israelites had overthrown Sihon and other rulers east of the Jordan, they kept most of the land for themselves, and thus became involved in quarrels with Moab and Ammon.

We shall refer later on to various changes which took place in the relations of Israel to Eastern Palestine.

Conquests in Western Palestine.—The Bible preserves conflicting traditions on this subject, which make it very difficult to arrive at anything like a clear and certain view of the history. Some of the narratives in *Genesis* refer to these events; *Joshua* itself combines inconsistent stories, of which one set is reproduced with additions in *Judges*.[1] The statements[2] that united Israel under the leadership of Joshua conquered the whole land in two pitched battles and exterminated the whole population are contradicted by the rest of the Biblical narratives, and may be set on one side.

[1] Judges i. The statement in i. 1 that these things happened after the death of Joshua is an unsuccessful attempt at historical criticism by an editor.

[2] *Joshua*.

On the other hand, Judges i. preserves an ancient and genuine historical tradition. Our information, however, does not enable us to discover the order and relations of the various events, and what follows is only given as probable and approximate.

We are not even sure whether the conquest was made from one base or from two or more. No doubt the main strength of Israel was in Eastern Palestine, but we have seen reasons for supposing that kindred clans were already established west of the Jordan; and further, some scholars hold that certain of the tribes advanced from Kadesh either before or after the arrival of Moses and the refugees from Egypt.

For the present we will deal with the Israelites whose headquarters were in the Plains of Moab. Probably the main advance across the Jordan was preceded by more or less successful raids; but after the death of Moses, a large group of tribes crossed the Jordan under the Ephraimite Joshua. Two tribes, Reuben and Gad, remained in permanent occupation of the eastern districts, but sent contingents to assist their kinsfolk.

Joshua captured and destroyed Jericho, the key to the passes westward, and advanced into the interior. Partly by negotiation, partly by force of arms, the tribe of Joseph established itself in the central Highlands, and captured and occupied Bethel. At some early stage of the settlement, the tribes that had accompanied

Joseph across the Jordan went, each its own way, to seek a home for itself. What mutual help they gave each other we cannot say. Neither they nor Joseph met with any very striking success; they succeeded in occupying much of the hill country, but the Canaanites still held most of the plains and valleys, and many of the cities. "They dwelt among the Canaanites," and sometimes the one party and sometimes the other had the upper hand. In this way Zebulun, Issachar, Naphtali, and Asher found a footing north of the Plain of Esdraelon; unless, indeed, Asher was there already. Dan went westward and tried to occupy a part of the maritime plain, but was penned into a corner of the mountains.

Simeon and Levi.—Recollections of another episode of these tribal wars are preserved in the form of personal narrative and reference in Gen. xxxiv., xlix. 5–7. The Israelites in the neighbourhood of Shechem had made terms with the inhabitants of that city, and were living in peace with them, when two of the tribes, Simeon and Levi, made a treacherous attack upon the city. For the moment they were successful; but the other tribes abandoned them to the revenge of the Shechemites, and Simeon and Levi were destroyed as tribes. The remnant of Simeon took refuge with Judah, and the survivors of Levi were scattered amongst the other tribes.

Judah.—Judah was only loosely connected with the rest of Israel. Indeed it is doubtful whether in early times it was reckoned as strictly belonging to Israel; it may have been as much Edomite or Kenite as Israelite, being bound to the Israelite tribes by the common worship of Yahweh. At any rate, it went its own way for many generations. It is not clear when Judah broke off from the main body, whether at Kadesh, or in the Plains of Moab, or after the passage of the Jordan. But from one of these points, the tribe set off on a separate expedition to the southern Highlands, being joined, as we have seen, at some time or other by the remnant of Simeon. The King of Jerusalem sought to bar their advance, but was defeated, and Judah established itself in the hill country to the south. The Kenite clan Caleb, acting in concert with Judah, took Hebron and occupied the surrounding districts.

Dan.—The Danites, finding themselves intolerably straitened in their original settlement in the south, cast about for some better home. They learnt through spies of a city, Laish, in the extreme north of Palestine; and the bulk of the tribe marched thither, captured the city, changed its name to Dan, and settled there. On the way they robbed a local shrine of its images and its priest; and with them founded the great sanctuary of Dan, which enjoyed a special prestige from the fact that its priest Jonathan was a grandson of Moses.

Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin.—At some time after the passage of the Jordan, the important Joseph-tribe became subdivided. Certain clansmen who settled in the south of the Joseph district, between Bethel and Jerusalem, became known as the *Bnê Yamin* or Sons of the South or Southerners, and the clan came to be spoken of as *Ben Yamin*, Son of the South,[1] our Benjamin. The central group of clans took the name *Ephraim*, "fruitful," from the fertile character of their lands. Those further north were called Manasseh. In time Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were reckoned as separate tribes. Later on some clans of Manasseh recrossed the Jordan, some distance to the south of the Sea of Galilee, and occupied Northern Gilead; so that we speak of Western and Eastern Manasseh.

Reuben.—From the terms in which Reuben is spoken of in Gen. xlix. 3, 4 and elsewhere, we gather that, at some time before the reign of Saul, Reuben, like Simeon and Levi, suffered serious disasters, so that as a tribe it disappears from the history.

The Situation at the Close of the Migration into Caanan.—In the last section we have passed beyond this period in order to show the complete development of the tribal system and the final settlement of each tribe. We will now briefly indicate the general position when

[1] The Hebrew *yâmîn* means literally "right hand," and is used geographically for "south."

the migration into Canaan and the first stage of the Conquest were complete.

The Israelites were established for the most part in the hill country, and had very largely arrived at a precarious *modus vivendi* with the Canaanites, which depended on a balance of power between the two parties, and was apt to disappear if either found itself strong enough to take advantage of the other.

The Israelite settlements were in four distinct groups: to the east of Jordan, Gad, Reuben, and later on some Manassite clans; to the north, Issachar, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali, and later on part of Dan; in the centre, Joseph, *i.e.* Ephraim and Manasseh; in the south, Judah, with Caleb and the remnant of Simeon. Two belts of Canaanite cities separated the northern group from the central, and the central from the southern; but the Joseph clans known as Benjamin partially connected Judah with Joseph. Shechem and its district remained an enclave in the territory of Joseph; and elsewhere, even in the districts coloured in maps as Israelite, there would be Canaanite towns and districts; indeed the Israelite settlements amongst the Canaanite population might be compared to a number of isles, islets, and rocks in the midst of a lake.

Israel being thus scattered and divided, its social and political organisation was necessarily of the slightest. There was no permanent government beyond the group

of sheikhs or elders in each town or small district: and the Israelites were only able to maintain themselves in the land because the Canaanites were equally divided. Nevertheless the union which Moses had formed was not wholly dissolved; there were still certain spiritual bonds between the scattered clans—a sense of kinship and a common faith in Yahweh. Again and again a revival of religious enthusiasm enabled the Israelites to combine against their enemies.

The Judges.—We have no continuous consecutive account[1] of the period between the Settlement in Canaan and the Monarchy; but the Book of Judges describes a number of disconnected episodes which illustrate the state of affairs at that time. Most of these are connected with certain men and one woman who are said to have "judged Israel." Doubtless they were often requested to settle disputes, but this function was quite secondary, and the "judges" were essentially bold and skilful captains who led the people in their wars with their Canaanite neighbours or amongst themselves. They did not "judge" Israel as a whole, but usually a single tribe; nor did they succeed one another like kings; two or more may have been "judging" at the same time in different parts of the country; there were periods in which there were no judges; and doubtless there were judges of whom no account has been preserved. Thus the

[1] *Cf.* below, p. 53, on Chronology.

Moabites had occupied Jericho and its territory; Ehud assassinated their king, Eglon, and collecting the Israelites from the hill country of Ephraim drove out the intruders. Gideon led his own clan, Abi-ezer, and his son Abimelech ruled over Shechem. Jephthah was chief of Gilead. As for Samson, he was simply a knight-errant: there is no sign that he ruled over anybody, least of all over himself.

Before summarising the general characteristics of the period, we may consider briefly the two most important episodes connected respectively with Deborah and Barak, and with Gideon and Abimelech.

Deborah and Barak.—This story is preserved to us in what is perhaps the most ancient piece of Hebrew literature now extant, the *Song of Deborah*, a poem composed shortly after the event it celebrates. Before the time of Deborah, the northern Israelites had been reduced to great straits. They were at the mercy of the Canaanites, who had practically disarmed them, and plundered and harried them as they pleased. But helpless as they seemed, Yahweh had not forgotten or forsaken His people.

Deborah, a prophetess—that is to say, an inspired and inspiring personality—preached a Holy War in the name of Yahweh; the Fiery Cross, so to speak, was sent far and wide amongst the Israelite tribes. From many quarters they rallied to the help of their kinsfolk, Ephraim,

Benjamin, and Machir[1] came from the central Highlands; Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali from the north. But some were recreant—the eastern tribes, Gad[2] and Reuben: and in the far north Dan and Asher.

The Canaanites gathered under their leader, Sisera, to crush the insurrection, and the two armies met in the Plain of Esdraelon—

"In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo."

Yahweh Himself hastened from His ancient dwelling-place in storm and tempest to aid His people.

"He went forth from Seir;
He marched from the lands of Edom.
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,
Yea the clouds dropped water,
The mountains ran with torrents at the presence of Yahweh.
. . . . . .
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

Again, as at the Red Sea, Yahweh rescued Israel by wind, storm, and floods. The deluge of rain turned the plain into a morass, where the Canaanite chariots and cavalry became a helpless prey to the light-armed Israelites. Broken and panic-stricken, they turned to flee across the Kishon, usually an insignificant brook, but now swollen into a fierce torrent, by which the fugitives were swept away.

[1] A clan of Joseph, afterwards called, or included in, Manasseh.
[2] Here described by the name of its district, Gilead.

Sisera fled alone, and sought refuge in the tent of a Kenite sheikh, but there he was treacherously assassinated by Jael, the sheikh's wife.

This victory finally established the Israelite supremacy in Northern Palestine.

Gideon and Abimelech.—This narrative as it stands is compiled from various early documents, and has been freely supplemented and annotated by late editors: the substance of the oldest tradition is as follows:—

The main scene of these events was the central Highlands about Shechem; and the chief actors are the Manassite clan Abi-ezer and its sheikhs, and the mixed Canaanite and Israelite population of Shechem.

The Eastern Bedouins, here spoken of as "Midianites, Amalekites, and children of the East," made annual raids in Western Palestine, driving off the sheep and cattle, and wasting the land. The inhabitants, Israelites and Canaanites, disunited and at variance with one another, could make no head against the raiders, and hid themselves and the poor salvage of their belongings in the fastnesses of the Highlands. But at last Yahweh raised up a deliverer. As He had called Moses, so now He called Gideon ben Joash of Abi-ezer. His own brothers had been killed by the Midianites, and the sacred duty of blood-revenge stirred him to action. "The Spirit of Yahweh took possession of him," and he summoned his fellow-clansmen to follow him against

the Midianites. Three hundred men, the whole fighting strength of the clan of Abi-ezer, responded to his summons. It was too small a force to challenge the Midianites in open battle, and Gideon had recourse to stratagem. He stationed his three hundred about the Midianite camp by night, with torches hidden in pitchers. At a given signal, the Abi-ezrites smashed the pitchers, waved the torches, and shouted. Roused from their sleep by this unearthly din, the Midianites broke into wild cries of terror and dismay, and fled headlong, with Gideon's three hundred at their heels.

Pursued and pursuers crossed the Jordan, and Gideon sought provisions from the Israelite cities of Succoth and Penuel, but the sheikhs were too much afraid of the Midianites to help him. Doubtless, however, he was supplied and reinforced from other sources. He overtook the Midianites, surprised and defeated them, and avenged his brethren by putting to death the two Midianite kings who had been captured.

He returned home to his native Ophrah, and celebrated his victory by erecting an altar to Yahweh with an image or ephod made out of the spoil.

His achievements secured him respect, deference, and authority in his native town and in the neighbourhood—so far "he judged Israel."

When he died his family expected that they or some one of them would succeed to his authority. Shechem,

a Canaanite city with an admixture of Israelites, had belonged to the sphere of Gideon's influence; he had taken a Shechemite concubine, by whom he had a son, Abimelech. This Abimelech, with the help of his mother's kinsfolk, massacred all the rest of Gideon's sons except one, and made himself not merely judge but king of the district. But his reign was short and disturbed; the new title implied a more stringent authority, and the Shechemites soon became restive. Abimelech met their turbulence with ruthless cruelty, but he was struck down in the full career of victory by a millstone thrown by a woman from the wall of a besieged tower; and the kingdom fell with him.

Progress of the Conquest.—It does not seem that there was any very striking development of Israelite power in the generations following the settlement. As we have seen, Dan acquired territory to the north, and certain Manassite clans in Bashan; while, on the other hand, Reuben probably lost some districts to Moab. As between Israel and the Canaanites, it was a sort of tug-of-war, in which each party alternately gains and loses a few inches, the advantage in the long run being with Israel. The victory of Deborah and Barak must have added to the territory over which Israel was dominant. This victory reveals the secret of Israelite success; the followers of Yahweh were liable to be seized by an access of religious fury, which filled the clans with

a spirit of unity and made them irresistible; the Spirit of Yahweh sprang upon their heroes, and endowed them with superhuman strength.

But the Israelites were also taking root in the country in more peaceful fashion. After all, they and the Canaanites were kindred peoples, and spoke dialects of the same language; so that even a precarious *modus vivendi* prepared the way for the absorption of the weaker by the stronger. Moreover, they had a very powerful inducement to union in their common enemies. The Philistines (of whom more later) and Eastern Bedouin, like the Midianites, were eager to plunder both Israelites and Canaanites. Thus in many districts the two races gradually fused into one people: note, for instance, the marriage of Gideon with a Shechemite, and the intimate relations between the Shechemites and their Israelite neighbours.

The Internal Relations of the Israelite Tribes.—The first effect of the Settlement in Canaan was to break up the Israelite Confederacy into its component tribes or clans. No one succeeded to such measure of authority as Moses and perhaps Joshua had exercised over the whole group of allies. For the most part each tribe had conquered a territory for itself, and henceforth it had to hold its own by itself, against hostile neighbours and invaders.

Simeon, Levi, and Reuben were allowed to succumb to their enemies without help from the rest of Israel.

Sometimes there was civil war. Gideon sacked Succoth and Penuel; Ephraim attacked Jephthah and his Gileadites, and met with a severe defeat.

But, on the other hand, many causes were working towards the future unity of the nation. In the desert a clan might wander from its kindred and allies, and never join them again, but now such geographical separation was no longer possible; the tribes had given up the nomad life, and settled down permanently as neighbours. Moreover, the conquest and absorption of the Canaanites was gradually filling up the gaps between the Israelite settlements, and thus facilitating union and mutual intercourse. But the chief bond which maintained a sense of kinship was the common loyalty to Yahweh. In His name Deborah called the tribes together for the great struggle against Sisera, and in His name the injured Levite [1] appealed for vengeance to His people throughout the length and breadth of the land.

But still Judah hardly belonged to the unity of Israel. It was separated from the other tribes by the important Canaanite city of Jerusalem, and had more to do with the Canaanites [2] and Kenites of the south than with the Israelites northward. Judah is not even mentioned in the song of Deborah.

Social Changes.—The Settlement in Canaan involved

[1] Judges xix. 29–xx. 1.

[2] Gen. xxxviii. 1, 2, read as tribal history of the period after the Settlement in Canaan.

a radical change in the life of the people. With the exception of a few clans in the south and east, they ceased to be nomad herdsmen, and settled down in fixed homes to cultivate the land; the Bedouin encampment gave place to the homestead, village, and town. The Sojourn in Egypt had already given some of the tribes a taste for the luxuries of civilised life—at any rate so far as flesh and fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlick[1] were concerned. Now they were brought into closer and more intimate relations with another form of civilisation, to which they gradually assimilated themselves. Their needs became more various and numerous, and they had to work harder to supply them. For a time they were largely dependent in such matters on the Canaanites; the commerce of Palestine remained for centuries chiefly in the hands of the Phœnicians, but after a while the arts and industries of civilised life developed among the Israelites.

Religion.—The one article of the Israelite creed was still that Yahweh was the Champion of Israel, and Israel was His people; but the Settlement in Canaan had brought with it a fuller revelation of the powers of Yahweh. His permanent house was still at Sinai, but His activity extended far out from that centre; He could strike Pharaoh on the Nile and at the Red Sea, and Sisera in the Plain of Esdraelon. He was still the God of Storm and Tempest, but He was also Lord of Palestine by

[1] Num. xi. 4, 5.

right of conquest, and therefore He must be the Giver of the fruits of the earth. As the Deity of a number of practically independent states scattered over considerable territory He was manifestly superior to a mere tribal god worshipped by a single compact people in a small district like Edom or Moab.

On the other hand, as Lord or *Ba'al* of Canaan, He was inevitably identified or confounded with Canaanite deities who bore that title. The religious ideas and worship of Israel were greatly influenced by those of Canaan. Moreover, the local authority of a deity was almost an axiom in those days. Israelites settling in a district of Palestine would find the local god or Ba'al in possession, so to speak, and would be honestly puzzled as to whether they could displace him in favour of Yahweh; or regard him as in some mysterious way the same as Yahweh; or whether they ought to worship him as well as Yahweh, or even instead of Yahweh. Sometimes they followed one, sometimes another of these four courses. But almost always they retained some measure of allegiance to Yahweh.

The Ark and the Tabernacle are ignored in the history of the judges;[1] but we read of sanctuaries and sacrifices. The Israelites appropriated Canaanite shrines and instituted new ones of their own. We read of sanctuaries at Ophrah, Shechem, Mizpah, Dan, Bethel, and Shiloh, and there must have been a great many

[1] Judges xx. 27 is a very late note.

more. The priesthood and the right of offering sacrifices are not confined to any particular family or caste; Micah makes his son a priest; Gideon and Manoah offer sacrifices. But the priesthood of any particular shrine would be hereditary; thus the priests of Dan traced their descent to Moses. Moreover, there was already a feeling that Levites were specially fitted for priests; but the origin of these Levites is a disputed point. Some regard them as the survivors of the old secular tribe, others hold that they had no connection with it, and that Levite here simply means priest. Images of Yahweh were used in worship,[1] and the example of Jephthah shows that under stress of a great emergency a human sacrifice might be offered. The repeated assassinations and other outrages show that morality was at a low ebb.

Chronology.—The periods in the detailed scheme of chronology in *Judges* were intended to be consecutive; but the scheme and its figures were not part of the ancient tradition, but were constructed by authors writing many centuries after the events happened. They are a *bonâ-fide* attempt at historical criticism; but the data at the disposal of these authors were quite insufficient, so that their scheme has no authority. We are still unable to say what period is covered by the events in *Judges;* but something will be said later as to the length of the period between the Exodus and the Monarchy.

[1] Judges viii. 27.

CHAPTER V

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN: II.—SAMUEL, SAUL, AND DAVID

I. AND II. SAMUEL

The Books of Samuel.—These books include extracts from very ancient documents which are of great historical value, notably II. Sam. ix.–xx., an account of David's court and family written within a generation or so of the events it narrates. The author has also introduced other traditions from later sources and less obviously authentic, *e.g.* the story of the early life of Samuel, and has added various notes.

The periods covered by *I. and II. Samuel* and *Judges* probably overlap. Eli and Samson may have been contemporaries.

The Philistines.—We must now turn our attention to this people, who appeared upon the scene towards the close of the period of the judges, and played a large part in the history of Israel for about a century.

The Philistines, like the Israelites, were settlers in Palestine, probably coming from Crete or Asia Minor; they first appear in the country in the reign of Rameses III., about 1202–1170 B.C., and probably effected a permanent settlement in the maritime plain

to the south-west, perhaps while the Israelites were winning territory for themselves in the Highlands. But unlike the Israelites, they were in no way akin to the older inhabitants of Syria and Canaan. The Philistines were Aryans, perhaps a branch of the Greek stock. The Greeks—not on this account, but because they first became acquainted with the south-west of Canaan—called it Palestine, the land of the Philistines.

These invaders soon formed a compact state, consisting of the territories of their five chief cities, and occupying the maritime plain south and east of Joppa, together with part of the adjoining Shephelah. These five cities, Ashdod, Askelon, Ekron, Gath and Gaza, formed a close and permanent confederacy. Though the new state was of comparatively small extent, its unity and homogeneity made it for the time being the strongest military power in Canaan. At this time the maritime plain northward was in the hands of their kinsfolk and allies; so the Philistines turned their attention to the southern and central Highlands. There was no understanding between them and the Israelites, but up to a certain point the operations of the two sets of invaders were mutually helpful: the Canaanites were between two fires, and were hopelessly divided and distracted. But two dogs gnawing at the same bone are sure to quarrel before long; and the time came when the advance guards of Israel and of the Philistines met. After that the history of Canaan for generations is the story of the

struggle between the two for the possession of the land. At first the Israelites had the worst of it: their westward advance was arrested once for all, and their southern settlements became tributary to the Philistines.

Samson.—It is uncertain how far the narratives about Samson are historical, but we may regard them as a true picture of the relations of Israel and the Philistines before the time of Saul.

The first collision between the two rival peoples is over; the southern Israelites have acknowledged their inferiority, and have submitted to occupy their lands as the tributaries of the Philistines. The men of Judah, who now at last appear upon the scene, admit that the Philistines are rulers over them.[1] The subjects and the dominant race are on friendly terms; the Danite Samson goes to and fro amongst the Philistines unhindered and unmolested, and marries a Philistine wife. It is only when his matrimonial troubles lead him into acts of violence against his wife's kinsfolk, that the Philistines interfere with him. Samson is a type of the young Israelite "bloods" who were equally ready to feast with the Philistines or to fight them, and whose patriotism was sluggish until it was stung into activity by private grievances. The sober-minded sheikhs of Judah frowned upon Samson's escapades, and did not hesitate to hand him over to the Philistines.

[1] Judges xv. 11.

Eli.—In the story of Eli, the scene changes to Shiloh in the central Highlands in the territory of Ephraim. Here we find the Ark, now lodged in the permanent Temple; the Tabernacle, apparently, had finally disappeared. We have a vivid picture of the life of a sanctuary in ancient Israel: the picture would serve, with slight changes, for any of the more important shrines of Yahweh at that time, the Ark being represented at Dan by the ephod, and elsewhere by similar sacred objects. The priesthood is a family possession, and is administered by the venerable Eli and his two sons, assisted by a young Ephraimite named Samuel, who sleeps in the shrine by the Ark for its better protection; just as in Exod. xxxiii. 11 the Ephraimite Joshua departed not out of the Sacred Tent. The shrine is lighted by a lamp which goes out at night. The priest's dues were a certain share of the sacrifices fixed by ancient custom. The inhabitants of the neighbouring district visited Shiloh for worship and sacrifice, especially at a yearly festival, perhaps after the vintage. At such times Shiloh was the scene of much social and family festivity.

Whether from his personal qualities or his official position or both, Eli exercised considerable influence in the neighbourhood, and is said to have "judged Israel."

But the old man had fallen upon evil days; the Philistines, having subdued the south, were now threatening

the central Highlands, and the Ephraimites would look for counsel and guidance to the priests of Yahweh, the Champion of Israel. But Eli's sons were high-handed, grasping, dissolute men. They raised the priestly dues beyond what was sanctioned by ancient custom, so that the shrine and its ministers were discredited. How could men expect that the Spirit of Yahweh would spring upon His people and fill them with the sacred fury that made victory certain?

Nevertheless the clansmen gathered together and met the invaders, only to suffer defeat; but in default of the Spirit of Yahweh, at any rate there was the Ark: the sheikhs sent for this sacred symbol, and the two sons of Eli bore it to the camp. With this Palladium surely Israel must conquer; but they only suffered a more severe defeat—the Ark was captured and the sons of Eli were among the slain. When Eli heard of the disaster, he fell off his high seat by the door of the Temple, broke his neck, and died.

This defeat left Ephraim at the mercy of the Philistines; they probably marched to Shiloh and destroyed the Temple. At any rate we hear nothing more of it except that its ruins were still visible in the time of Jeremiah.[1]

The Wanderings of the Ark.—The captured Palladium was borne in triumph to Ashdod and placed in the temple of Dagon. But Yahweh could not be insulted

[1] Jer. vii. 12.

with impunity; a plague broke out in Ashdod, the Ark was sent from city to city, and wherever it went the plague followed it. Then the Philistines sent the deadly trophy back to Israel, with rich gifts to propitiate its offended Deity; but still the plague followed it. The terrified Israelites passed it on to the Canaanite city of Kirjath-jearim. But now the plague seemed to have spent its force; for the present we hear of no more victims to the awful sanctity of this throne of Yahweh. At Kirjath-jearim it remained long years in harmless obscurity.

Samuel.—We must now return to Samuel. Many scholars hold that the traditions which connect him with Eli, and later on make him a victorious general, are not trustworthy. We may, therefore, confine ourselves to those events of his life which are more certain and more public; in any case Samuel was an epoch-making personality.

We meet with Samuel in I. Sam. ix. 6, established in an unknown city of Ephraim as a Man of God, or Prophet, or Seer. The profession itself was not particularly exalted; the seer was a soothsayer who might be expected, amongst other things, to discover the whereabouts of lost property for a small fee. But Samuel's character and gifts had raised him far above the level of an ordinary professional prophet. Like Eli, he was the most influential man of his district; the guests did not begin the feast till he had blessed the

food.[1] A later tradition[2] gives him a district in the south of Ephraim[3] as the sphere of his activity, which it describes in the conventional phrase as "judging Israel." His reputation, however, was purely local; he was unknown to Saul of Gibeah in Benjamin. But Samuel had a direct influence on the development of Israel and its religion beyond that of any other judge; he was associated with the rise of the prophetical order, and with the establishment of the monarchy. Both of these events are closely connected with the struggle against the Philistines.

The Early Prophets.—The early deliverances, victories, and conquests of Israel were due to devotion to Yahweh and confidence in His help. The failure to resist the Philistines was at once the result and the symptom of languishing faith. "The word of Yahweh was rare in those days, and visions were seldom seen."[4] Moreover, as the older writers would have put it, the Spirit of Yahweh did not spring upon men. Yet the hope of Israel lay in the renewed manifestation of His power. At this time religious fervour began to kindle, not in one conspicuous leader, but in bands of inspired men, or rather, perhaps, men who sought inspiration, seeking to

[1] I. Sam. ix. 13.

[2] I. Sam. vii. 16 f.

[3] Gilgal here is not that near Jericho; the Mizpah, Gilgal, and Ramah of this passage are all to be looked for in southern Ephraim, not far from Bethel.

[4] I. Sam. iii. 1.

draw down upon themselves the Spirit of Yahweh. Parents devoted their children to Yahweh; Samson and Samuel are spoken of as Nazirites or devotees, and the Spirit responded and came upon them. Already amongst the Canaanites there were the *Nebi'im* or prophets, guilds of dervishes, who excited themselves to religious fervour by music, song, and dance. Similar bands appeared amongst the Israelites. From the beginning the movement was patriotic; it tended to stir up in the people the ecstasy of devotion to Yahweh which gave them victory. Samuel put himself at the head of this movement; he was no more a mere ecstatic devotee than he was a mere soothsayer. Even from the little we are told about him, we may well believe that he was conscious of an inspiration which we should now describe as alike moral, spiritual, and rational; and that he became a type and ideal of the true prophet, so that others of the order sought a similar inspiration; and that thus another important step was taken in the process by which religion acquired a moral value. For the moment, however, the most important result was the revival of national vigour; a new spirit was infused into the people, and the way was prepared for a crusade against the oppressors. Tradition credited Samuel with a victory over them.[1]

Saul.—But the compact organisation and steady discipline of the Philistines could not be held in check

[1] I. Sam. vii. 5 ff.

by spasmodic, sporadic outbursts of enthusiasm. Samuel saw that religious zeal needed to be reinforced by political unity and secular authority; and these were commonly associated with the office and title of "king." He felt no call to assume such a position himself, but waited for Divine guidance. A trivial incident brought the future king before him, in the person of Saul ben Kish of the tribe of Benjamin, "a man choice and goodly; there was no Israelite more goodly than he; from his shoulders and upward he was taller than any of the people."[1] After a long and fruitless quest for some strayed asses he came to consult the Seer as to where he might find them. He came on the advice of a servant, not through personal knowlege. Inquiring his way as a stranger, he met an old man and asked to be directed to the Seer's house. It was Samuel himself, and as he looked upon the handsome form and fine presence of the questioner, the Spirit of Yahweh stirred within him, and he answered:—

"I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day; and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is thine heart. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, be not anxious about them, for they are found. And for whom is all the wealth[2] of Israel? Is it not for thee and for all thy father's house?"

The reference to "all that is in thine heart" and to

[1] I. Sam. ix. 2. [2] Lit. "that which is desirable."

"the wealth of Israel" shows that Saul had already felt kindlings of patriotic ambition not unmixed with visions of personal dignity and splendour. Saul made the usual conventional reply of the Oriental, that he was too utterly insignificant to be capable of attaining such distinction.

That night Saul feasted with Samuel, and the next morning the Seer anointed his guest in the name of Yahweh to be prince over His inheritance, and gave him three signs, which duly came to pass; only the third has any special significance. It was fulfilled thus.

As he neared his home at Gibeah [1] he met a band of prophets "prophesying," *i.e.* abandoning themselves to religious ecstasy by music, song, and dance. He was caught in the contagion of their excitement; the Spirit of Yahweh sprang mightily upon him, and he fell into a like ecstasy.

Soon, however, the Divine possession left him, and he became, to all appearance, his ordinary self. He went quietly home, and took up his old life, saying nothing to any one of his call to a higher destiny. The man had come, but his hour was not yet.

The Relief of Jabesh-gilead.—He had not long to wait for his opportunity. The Ammonites, under their king Nahash, laid siege to Jabesh, a city of Gilead, and reduced it to extremity. The only terms on which Nahash would allow the city to surrender were that the

[1] R.V., margin.

right eyes of the inhabitants should be put out. They promised to submit to this hard condition if they might be allowed seven days' respite in which to seek help from their fellow-countrymen. Nahash agreed; and the men of Jabesh sent their messengers far and wide throughout Israel. They met with no response till they came to Gibeah, and there the people only heard them with helpless wailing; until in the evening Saul came from the fields with his oxen, and as he heard the grim tidings, the Spirit of God sprang mightily upon him; he hewed a yoke of oxen in pieces, and sent them throughout the land, saying—

"Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul, so shall it be done unto his oxen."

The braver spirits amongst the neighbouring clans responded to the summons; Saul led them across the Jordan, surprised the Ammonite camp shortly before daybreak, utterly routed them, and delivered the besieged city.

Similar achievements had given Gideon and Jephthah the vague local authority of a "judge," but now, probably in obedience to some Divine oracle, directing and giving definite form to the popular enthusiasm, the people gathered at the sanctuary of Gilgal,[1] and with solemn sacrifices and much fasting Saul was anointed king. The exact part taken by Samuel in these pro-

[1] Whether in the plain of the Jordan or in Southern Ephraim is uncertain.

ceedings is not clear,[1] but the formal recognition of Saul as king may very well have been due to his influence.

Saul and the Philistines.—But the relief of Jabesh-gilead was only a prelude to the main task of Saul's reign, the struggle with the Philistines. Let us glance for a moment at the situation at the new king's accession. The Philistines had long been dominant over Judah and the south, and were probably also supreme in the central highlands and in the territory of Saul's own tribe Benjamin. At any rate, there was a Philistine governor[2] in Gibeah, Saul's native town. Indeed, according to one tradition, the Philistines had completely disarmed the Israelites, so that amongst Saul's followers only he himself and Jonathan had swords and spears. Probably the districts near to the Philistine territory proper were organised under Philistine officials and Israelites supposed to be loyal to their masters. Elsewhere their hold on the country would be slighter, depending on scattered garrisons and casual raids for the collection of tribute. Thus the Philistines were contented with a partial military occupation of the country; they did not settle it with colonies of their

[1] I. Sam. x. 17–27, xi. 12–14, xii., in their present form are a reconstruction and interpretation of the history by a late editor. See "Century Bible."

[2] I. Sam. x. 5, R.V. "garrison." The difference is immaterial; a garrison would have a commander, and a governor would have an escort.

own people. This policy partly accounts both for their failure to hold the highlands, and for their success in maintaining their independence in the maritime plain; they struck no roots in Israelite territory, but they did not weaken their home strength.

Saul seems to have lost no time; immediately after his election he began to make preparations for a prolonged struggle. The recovery of Israelite independence was a different matter from the relief of Jabesh-gilead; it could not be effected by a single blow struck by a levy *en masse* made for a special emergency; nor could the general levy of the tribes be kept together for continuous warfare. Some sort of standing army was necessary, and Saul selected 3000 men and sent the rest home.

It appears that the new king was a man in the prime of life, having a son, Jonathan, already a fine soldier. Saul divided his force into two bands; he kept 2000 about his own person, and placed the remaining 1000 under the command of Jonathan. They took up positions in the neighbourhood of Bethel, and Jonathan struck the first blow by slaying the Philistine governor of the district. The Philistines advanced in force to suppress the revolt, and occupied positions to the south of Saul and Jonathan. The Israelite population retired to strongholds in the mountains, or fled across the Jordan. Saul's army dwindled down to 600, and he and his followers, held in check by a detachment of

the enemy, were compelled to look on while the rest of the Philistines systematically laid waste the country. At last an act of desperate valour on the part of Jonathan brought on a general engagement, in which the Philistines were routed. Their Israelite auxiliaries and camp-followers turned upon their masters, and the country rose against them as they fled; so that the large Philistine army, probably the bulk of their fighting strength, suffered very heavy loss. Thus, for a time at any rate, the enemies of Israel were crippled, and most of the subject territory regained its independence.

The contest was not over: "there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul,"[1] and the tide of war ebbed and flowed on the frontiers; but, on the whole, Israel held its ground and maintained its independence until the fatal day of Gilboa.

Saul's other Wars.—Indeed, Saul had leisure and resources to carry other wars to successful issues. Besides the Ammonites, he "vexed" the Moabites and the Syrians.[2] More especially, Saul crushed the Amalekites, with whom Israel had an ancient feud dating from the time when the nomad tribes disputed about the pasture lands round Kadesh. Zeal for the God of Israel called for the destruction of the enemies of the chosen people; and Samuel, in the name of Yahweh,

[1] I. Sam. xiv. 52.

[2] In I. Sam. xiv. 47, read "Aram" for "Edom"; the difference in the Hebrew words is infinitesimal.

bade Saul march southward and exterminate Amalek for His greater glory. Saul obeyed, but with culpable remissness spared the Amalekite king, Agag, and the sheep and cattle. When Samuel discovered these omissions, he sternly rebuked Saul, and "hewed Agag in pieces before Yahweh."

It is possible that Samuel had been inclined to regard Saul as his nominee, and to dictate to him. Saul would resent such interference; and so this incident was the occasion of a final breach between them. Later writers traced Saul's subsequent misfortunes to Yahweh's displeasure at the king's undue humanity.

The New Kingdom.—We must briefly consider Saul's internal administration, remembering throughout that there was very little administration of any kind in the modern sense. The idea of kingship in Israel was not altogether new; Abimelech, as we have seen, had made a brief and disastrous experiment on a small scale. Saul's reign was on an altogether different level; under him Israel made a great step towards unity.

At the same time we must not even now think of Israel as forming a compact state like the Philistine confederacy. Saul's strength mainly rested on his own tribe of Benjamin, together with neighbouring clans belonging to Ephraim and Judah. Contingents and volunteers would come to him from the other tribes, especially those in the central highlands and east of

Jordan; and all would send him presents and perhaps make some formal acknowledgment of him as king. All, too, would seek his aid against hostile neighbours; the wars with Moab and Ammon were undertaken in the interests of the eastern tribes; and Saul may have fought with Aram in defence of either Bashan and Gilead or Asher, Naphtali and the northern Dan.

The object of the people in electing Saul was to provide themselves with a military organisation, especially a permanent commander-in-chief: the only minister of Saul's that we hear of is Abner, the "captain of the host"; and the chief thing that ancient tradition tells us of his methods of government is that he enlisted in his following every promising recruit he could find.[1] There is no sign that he organised any civil administration; the old self-government of the tribes, clans, and towns continued. So far as Saul exercised any authority in districts where he was not himself present with an armed force, it would be through the local sheikhs, not through officials of his court. The king would certainly be called upon to settle disputes.

The Defeat on Mount Gilboa.—A deepening gloom gathered about Saul's later years; the long indecisive war with the Philistines wore out the enthusiasm and strained the mutual confidence of king and people. The quarrel with Samuel alienated the zealots through whom the spirit of Yahweh possessed the warriors of

[1] I. Sam. xiv. 52.

Israel. In Saul himself that spirit was no longer a guide and an inspiration, but a brooding darkness, goading him to madness. The music and the friendship of David of Bethlehem, minstrel and knight-errant, gave him relief for a time; while David's prowess gave a more favourable turn to the Philistine war. But Saul's melancholy returned, and brought with it fits of jealousy towards the young hero, till at last David fled first to the wilderness, and then to the Philistines. At the same time the breach between Saul and the devotees of Yahweh was widened; the king massacred a whole guild of priests[1] on the charge of aiding and abetting David, to whom the sole survivor fled. Hence in Saul's extremity, when he sought to inquire of Yahweh, he could obtain no answer either by prophets, or by dreams, or by the sacred lot.

Then the Philistines made a supreme effort to break down the resistance of Israel. This time they adopted a new strategy: instead of making a direct attack on the strongholds of the central highlands, they marched along the sea-coast and penetrated to the plain of Esdraelon. Saul marched to meet them, and fought a pitched battle under Mount Gilboa: the Israelites were utterly defeated, and Saul and his sons were slain. Thus the Philistine supremacy over western Palestine was re-established.

The Character and Work of Saul.—We must re-

[1] I. Sam. xxii.

member that all the documents which offer us information about Saul have been edited by writers to whom David was an ideal saint, poet, and king. Nevertheless the first king of Israel remains a great and tragic figure. His success and his ruin were alike due to his susceptibility to religious excitement, which sometimes roused him to passionate all-conquering zeal for Yahweh and His people, and at other times plunged him into a reckless despair in which he struck savagely at real or imaginary enemies. When we remember that Samuel called this dangerous gift into action, we may feel that he was responsible for directing it. The irritable and suspicious depression of Saul's later years must have been partly due to the opposition of the prophets; if Samuel and his followers had had more patience with Saul, the crimes and tragedies that closed his reign might have been averted.

His defeat and death seemed to undo his work, and to leave matters where they were at his accession. Yet his failure had made David's success possible. He had accustomed the people to a monarchy; for several years the king had given them independence and a measure of safety and victory, and had shown them that it was possible to hold the Philistines at bay. And all this had been done in the name of Yahweh.

David.—In David and his family the tribe of Judah reappears as an important factor in the history of Israel. He seems to have come of a warrior stock; his brothers

and cousins were able soldiers and captains. He himself was a man of many gifts and graces, a magnetic personality, winning popularity by a charm of manner, and maintaining it by kindness and generosity; a man of some culture, musician and poet; at the same time endowed with personal bravery, some skill as a leader; and also possessed of a measure of statesmanship. His personal charm was perhaps the chief secret of his success: it inspired his followers with confidence and enthusiasm; and it secured the loyalty and devotion of lieutenants who were sometimes stronger and more capable than David himself. At the outset of his career, he won the favour of Saul and the friendship of his son Jonathan, and made himself popular with the people. When he fell into disgrace with Saul, he became, like Jephthah, a captain of banditti in the unsettled frontier districts. Later on, he took service with the Philistine leader, Achish, king of Gath, who made him warden of the southern frontier, and gave him Ziklag for his headquarters. There David was practically a tributary prince, with a personal following of his own.

These vicissitudes provided David with an admirable training for his future career; the camps of Saul and of Achish were advanced schools of arms for those days: and at the court of Gath he might learn something of civil administration.

David at Hebron.—The catastrophe of Gilboa found David in a position to take full advantage of the all but

extinction of the house of Saul. The opportune jealousy of the Philistine chiefs had saved David from the necessity of fighting against his fellow-countrymen. He had used his position at Ziklag to establish friendly relations with Judah and the kindred Kenite clans. For this reason, and because he was a fellow-tribesman, Judah would naturally look to him as a leader; and on the other hand the favourite of Achish would be acceptable to the Philistines. David therefore occupied Hebron, and there the men of Judah anointed him their king.

Meanwhile the Israelite commander-in-chief, Abner, had set up Saul's son Ishbaal[1] as king, with his capital at Mahanaim, east of the Jordan, and there ensued a long struggle between the rival kings. Probably Ishbaal and Abner also acknowledged the Philistine supremacy, and the suzerain power looked on with equanimity at a civil war which promised to drain Israel of its fighting strength, and leave it more than ever at the mercy of its oppressors.

Joab.—In this period Joab first appears in the history, and remains till the last days of David, "the power behind the throne." Joab, Abishai, and Asahel were the sons of Zeruiah, David's sister. Abishai, and probably the other two, joined David after his flight from Saul. Joab was a commoner, coarser type than either Saul or David, a brave soldier and an able captain. Besides

[1] Ishbosheth, "Man of Shame," is a corruption. The "baal" in Ishbaal is a title of Yahweh.

courage, he had the other primitive virtue of loyalty to his kinsfolk, and he served David with a devotion untrammelled by inconvenient scruples.

When we first read of his achievements he is in command of David's forces, and defeats Abner, Ishbaal's general; and in the list of David's ministers Joab is captain of the host—*i.e.* commander-in-chief. The military achievements of David's reign were largely due to Joab; the uncle would neither have attained his throne nor kept it without his nephew's help. Moreover, in the present form of the story, David has the exceptional good fortune, that the men who stood in his way, like Saul, Abner, and Ishbaal, are removed by the spontaneous action of Joab and others; the king incurs no responsibility.

David, King of Israel.—As the civil war went on, the balance inclined more and more in favour of David. Abner was probably getting old and weary of an endless task, and somewhat impatient of the king who was nominally his master. His overbearing attitude towards Ishbaal led to a scene of angry recrimination between them; and Abner felt it was time to make his peace with David. He visited the king of Judah at Hebron, and arranged—doubtless for some suitable reward—that the tribes which supported Ishbaal should transfer their allegiance to David. But on his way back he was treacherously slain by Joab, in revenge for the death of Asahel, whom Abner had killed in battle. David

repudiated all responsibility for this act, gave Abner a state funeral, and composed a lamentation for him ; but he did not venture to punish Joab.

After the death of Abner, the cause he had so long supported was hopeless ; and Ishbaal was promptly assassinated by two of his officers, who expected a liberal recompense from David. This time, however, he not only repudiated the crime, but also put the assassins to death.

Now all internal obstacles were removed, and the Israelite sheikhs came to Hebron, and made a "covenant" with David by which he became king of Israel. This covenant implies terms and conditions ; we are not told what they were, but doubtless they safeguarded the rights and authority of the tribal chiefs and other local leaders.

David and the Philistines.—The collapse of Ishbaal's power and the reunion of Israel under David came about so suddenly that it took the Philistines by surprise, and they had no time to interpose while the negotiations were going on. Probably, too, David took care to give them frequent assurances of his continued loyalty, without informing them of the new turn affairs had taken or asking their consent to the extension of his authority. His conduct was as much a *casus belli* as if the ruler of a native state in India should assume the government of a neighbouring district without consulting the English authorities. Hence, when the Philistines heard what had happened, they poured an overwhelming force into Judah, and David was compelled to retreat to some

strong position in the highlands, whence he succeeded in inflicting severe blows upon the enemy.

We are not told much about this war; but it is clear that David made Israel permanently independent of the Philistines; but that, on the other hand, the Philistines did not become subject to Israel. The war was probably terminated by a treaty;[1] David's personal relations with Achish and his court would facilitate some arrangement.

David's other Wars.—David's next most important achievement was the capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites. This does not seem to have taken place till the chief stress, at any rate, of the Philistine war was over.[2] The city was carried by an assault, led by Joab, who was rewarded by being made captain of the host.

David, sometimes in person, sometimes through Joab, also carried on successful wars with his other neighbours, Moab, Edom, Ammon, and the Syrians.

David's last years.—The declining years of David's life were hardly happier than those of Saul. His own sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, was followed by similar crimes in his own family. His favourite son Absalom slew his brother Amnon in revenge for an outrage against his sister Tamar, and was driven into exile. After his recall he organised a rebellion, and succeeded in occupying Jerusalem and western Palestine. But David escaped across the Jordan: Absalom followed

[1] II. Sam. viii. probably does not mean more than this.

[2] A careful examination shows that the narrative in *Samuel* is placed too early.

him, and was defeated and slain by Joab. The Israelites were induced to restore David to the throne, and Amasa, Absalom's general, was given Joab's post. A new revolt, however, broke out, and Joab took advantage of Amasa's delay in acting to assassinate him, and resume the office of captain of the host. He then promptly suppressed the revolt.

David's last years were further embittered by court and harem intrigues for the succession. His eldest son, Adonijah, tried to get himself proclaimed king while his father was still living, but Bathsheba, supported by Nathan the prophet, induced David to proclaim her son Solomon king, and Adonijah's movement collapsed.

David's Dominions.—David completed the political task which Moses had begun. Moses had formed the tribes into a confederacy; David united them in a single organised state, holding a compact, continuous territory. Hitherto one great bar to unity had been the Jebusite possession of the strong fortress of Jerusalem and its territory. David's capture of this city joined the central tribes to Judah. Probably he also brought other Canaanite districts under his authority. But as the accounts of the Philistine wars are silent as to any trouble with the Canaanites, it seems that, for the most part, the Canaanites had felt the new invaders to be their enemies, and had made common cause with Israel, so that these wars had assisted the absorption of the old population.

There was, however, no further extension of Israelite

territory in the strict sense; no new settlements were made. The maritime plain remained for the most part in the hands of the Philistines and Phœnicians. It is true that Moab, Edom, Damascus, and some other territories were conquered in the same sense that the Philistines conquered Israel; they paid tribute, and the lands were partly occupied by Israelite garrisons. But such conquests are lost much more easily than they are made.

David's Army.—Saul had organised a kind of standing army and appointed a "captain of the host:" David maintained these, and added to them a corps of foreign mercenaries, "the Cherethites and Pelethites," largely Philistines, whom he formed into a separate command under a "captain," who seems to rank with the captain of the host.

Such a body made the king less dependent on popular favour; it was largely by means of the mercenaries that David suppressed the revolts at the close of his reign. The value of the corps was at once appreciated, and it became a permanent institution in Judah.

David's Ecclesiastical Policy.—All Israelites reckoned themselves true worshippers of Yahweh, but we have seen that Samuel associated himself with the ecstatic prophets in support of a special tradition as to the service and worship of Yahweh. We cannot now define the exact difference between this party[1]—which we may

[1] "Party" is too definite, but the matter cannot be put more accurately in a brief summary.

call the Zealots—and the rest of Israel, but it probably stood for a more exclusive devotion to Yahweh and for more ethical and spiritual views of religion. When the Zealots broke with Saul, they attached themselves to David. Even as a captain of banditti and an auxiliary of the Philistines, David had a priest and oracle of Yahweh in his camp, when Saul could not obtain an answer from Him by any of the recognised means. After the capture of Jerusalem he further strengthened his position by establishing a royal chapel or shrine in his new capital, to which he brought the ark, the most sacred object which Israel possessed. More fortunate than Saul, David was not overshadowed by any great ecclesiastics like Samuel controlling the religious forces of the time; and he was careful to prevent any centralising of sacerdotal authority in a single hand. His royal chapel was not only served by Abiathar, of the house of Eli, the priesthood of the ark, but also by Zadok, of some other family, by some of David's own sons, and by a certain Ira the Jairite. Moreover there were two prophets attached to the court, Nathan and Gad. This royal sanctuary, possessing the ark, and served by a numerous and influential priesthood, must at once have become important; and, for the time at any rate, it was a bulwark of the throne, as David intended it should be. Its priests gave him valuable help against Absalom.

The Internal Administration.—David reigned for forty

years, and for a large portion of that time he was able to keep the territory of Israel free from invaders. Thus he had leisure, resources, and opportunity to organise the civil government of the country. There is no reason to suppose that David attempted to replace the old local authorities by a centralised administration, but probably the sheikhs were more really subordinate to the king, and royal officers were associated with them for special purposes. This is partly suggested by the list of David's ministers, which is much more extensive than that of Saul. In addition to the captains and priests, we meet with a recorder (*mazkîr*), sometimes supposed to be the court historian, but more probably a chief adviser or grand vizier; with a scribe or secretary (*sopher*), and also with an officer over the *corvée* or forced labour.[1] The king also acted as a supreme court of appeal.

David and his Work.—Like most successful rulers, David owed much to circumstance and to his officers and ministers. It is even doubtful whether he can be credited with knowledge of men and wise selection of agents. These seem to have been mostly provided for him by family relationship and the conditions of secular and ecclesiastical politics. Joab was his nephew, and Abiathar the priest came as a refugee to his camp. When David acted for himself in such matters, as in the case of Abner and Amasa, he was not particularly successful.

[1] R.V. "tribute"; but the word means labour exacted without payment, though possibly food was supplied.

The great changes, therefore, of this reign were the work of a group of whom David was the most conspicuous, but perhaps not the most influential, member. How much was due to him we cannot say, but a large share must be ascribed to his wisdom and experience, to his tact and geniality and patriotism, and to his thorough sympathy with the zealots in their devotion to the moral and spiritual interests of Israel. David was the man after Yahweh's own heart.

These changes were of supreme importance: by successful wars, by internal organisation of the state, and by the establishment of the strong fortress of Jerusalem as the civil and religious capital, the independence of the chosen people was secured for centuries; and thus Israel was preserved to be the organ of Divine revelation.

David's character was exceptionally high for his times. It is doubtful whether we can credit him with the mystic piety of the psalms which a late tradition has associated with his name; but he stands in the succession of inspired men who welcomed growing light and larger knowledge on the ways of God. In his private life, his sins were those of his time and station; but his penitence and his virtues were his own. He was a loyal friend and generous foe. We see him at his best in his dealings with Saul and Jonathan, when he spares the sleeping king; when he laments his fallen prowess; when he protects and cherishes the son of Jonathan.

CHAPTER VI

SOLOMON

I. Kings i.–xi.

External Politics and Commerce.—Solomon reaped the fruit of the long wars waged by David; he inherited a strong compact state, assured of its own independence, and exercising suzerainty over several of its neighbours. The new king did not attempt any further conquests, and during the early years of his reign the extent of the Israelite dominion and its relation to other states remained substantially unchanged.

The king of Israel was now important enough to be allowed to marry an Egyptian princess, and her father captured the Canaanite city of Gezer and presented it to his son-in-law. This new acquisition completed the Israelite conquest of Canaan.

Solomon was also allied with Hiram of Tyre, and bartered the wheat and oil of Palestine for timber and the services of skilled artisans. A more doubtful bargain was the sale of twenty cities of Galilee for 120 talents of gold.[1] The two kings were also associated in trading expeditions by sea to Ophir, perhaps Eastern

[1] I. Kings ix. 10–14.

Arabia. Moreover, there was active commercial intercourse with Egypt and elsewhere. The royal ventures were supplemented by private enterprise; large quantities of gold, silver, spices, timber, and other foreign wares were imported, so that the people enjoyed a large measure of material prosperity.

These peaceful achievements, however, were combined with a relaxation of military vigour; at some period in Solomon's reign, two important dependencies, Edom and Damascus, regained their independence, and we do not read of any serious effort to reduce them.

Internal Organisation and Buildings.—Solomon took steps to make the royal authority stronger, more efficient and more far-reaching, chiefly, as far as our records go, with a view to the collection of revenue and the maintenance of an army—which latter, apparently, he did not know how to use.

We have a longer list of ministers. David's government[1] included a commander-in-chief, a captain of the mercenary guard, a superintendent of forced labour, a recorder, a scribe and priests, and a "king's friend." In addition to these, Solomon had a superintendent of prefects, and a master of the household.[2]

A more striking innovation was the division of the country into twelve districts, each under a royal re-

[1] II. Samuel xx. 23–26, xv. 37.

[2] I. Kings iv. 3–6, Septuagint. In the Hebrew text there is no captain of the guard—perhaps Benaiah held both military offices.

presentative or prefect, charged with the duty of provisioning the court month by month.[1] This division largely ignored the ancient tribes, and seems to show that the tribal system was passing away.

Like most powerful rulers, Solomon signalised his reign by numerous splendid buildings, and for this purpose made extensive use of the *corvée* or forced labour. This again led to increased exertion of authority by the central government; and, incidentally, the complete subjugation of the Canaanites was shown by the fact that they had to endure the main portion of this burden.[2]

The king also attempted to maintain his hold on the country, and to provide for its defence, by fortifying a number of cities and establishing military depôts; no doubt both cities and depôts were garrisoned by troops under royal governors.

Naturally the most important work was done in Jerusalem; its fortifications were strengthened, and the city was adorned with a temple of Yahweh and palaces for Solomon and his harem.

The Temple and Religious Policy.—David's royal chapel had been merely a tent which served as a shrine for the ark. This tent Solomon replaced by a permanent Temple, which was probably larger and more splendid than any of the earlier sanctuaries of Israel.

[1] I. Kings iv. 7 ff.
[2] I. Kings ix. 20 f.; *cf.* v. 13, xi. 28.

The priesthood of the Temple was now permanently vested in the family of a certain Zadok; for the significance of this fact we must return for a moment to the circumstances of Solomon's accession. That event was due to the victory of one party at the court over its opponents. Both the military and ecclesiastical leaders were divided; Adonijah was supported by Joab the commander-in-chief, and by Abiathar, one of the priests of the royal sanctuary, while the other priest of that shrine, Zadok, together with the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah, the captain of the guard, espoused the cause of Solomon. The victorious party probably represented, amongst other interests and principles, the more moral and spiritual views of Yahweh and His relation to Israel, and the house of Zadok became the depository of the tradition handed down from Moses and Samuel.

At any rate, the formula uttered by Solomon at the dedication of the Temple marks an important stage in the development of revealed religion. Its original form may be translated thus:[1]—

"The sun has Yahweh set in the heavens;
He (himself) has resolved to dwell in thick darkness:
Built have I a lofty mansion for thee,
A place for thee to dwell in for all ages."

This short poem does not imply a belief that Yahweh was the one only deity; it could be paralleled from

[1] "Century Bible" on I. Kings viii. 12 f.

poems and liturgies used by polytheists. But the God who has set the sun in the heavens is much more than a mere local, tribal deity.

Probably the people generally did not feel that such devotion to Yahweh was inconsistent with the erection of sanctuaries by Solomon to foreign deities for the convenience of his foreign wives and their suites. Alliance with Egypt and Tyre would imply some such toleration of the worship of these states; just as, when public Romanist services were forbidden in England, the ambassadors of France and Spain were allowed to have the mass celebrated in their private chapels. No doubt, too, the zealous Protestants who were scandalised by such doings had their parallels in ancient Israel.

The Wise and Splendid King.—The personality of Solomon, like that of Moses, is obscured, because later tradition treated him as an ideal figure, the typical example of a sage, and of a powerful and magnificent ruler. Thus the section of *Chronicles* dealing with his reign[1] omits all references to his extensive and crowded harem, to the erection of sanctuaries for foreign gods, to the loss of Edom and Damascus, and to other discreditable matters. Even in *Kings* the story has been influenced by the same idealising tendency, but enough of ancient tradition has been preserved to show that Solomon was by no means ideal. Nevertheless he was a remarkable figure, and an important factor in the

[1] II. Chron. i.–ix.

history of his times. It is true that little, if any, of the contents of the numerous works connected with his name can be the actual work of Solomon; but the rapid development of Israel under its three first kings would naturally lead to a certain literary activity, in which Solomon would have his share as author and patron.

It was a notable achievement to hold together the various Israelite tribes and their Canaanite dependents in a single state; and it is quite possible that Edom and Damascus were deliberately allowed to maintain the independence they had recovered, on the ground that Israel would do better to strengthen its internal resources than to spend its energies in maintaining a precarious suzerainty over disaffected tributaries.

On the whole, Solomon showed himself a statesmanlike ruler; there was, however, one great blot upon his administration, of which we will speak in our next chapter in dealing with its fatal consequences.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISRUPTION

Rehoboam, *c.* B.C. 932–916.[1]
Jeroboam I., *c.* B.C. 932–912.
Shishak, I. Kings xiv. 25 = Sheshenq I., *c.* B.C. 950–928

I. Kings xii.–xiv.

The Revolt.—The northern tribes, especially Ephraim, had long regarded themselves as the chief members of the Israelite confederation; only urgent necessity and the personal gifts of the first three kings and their ministers induced the northerners to acquiesce in the rule of a Benjamite or Judahite and in the establishment of the capital in the south. The new sanctuary, the Temple, aroused the jealousy of the more ancient shrines; and its new priesthood, the house of Zadok, were obnoxious to the friends of the house of Eli. Solomon's policy had aggravated the discontent; he had drained the resources of the tribes to adorn his royal city and maintain a splendid court, and he had offended the zeal of the devotees of Yahweh by his tolerance of foreign religions. His death was the natural occasion for an outbreak.

Several circumstances strengthened the hands of the hostile party. Rehoboam, the heir to the throne, was young and inexperienced; but, on the other hand,

[1] For these and other dates of the period of the Monarchy, see Skinner's *Kings*, "Century Bible," p. 51.

the opposition found an able leader, supported by the power of Egypt. In Solomon's reign, a certain Jeroboam of Ephraim had shown marked ability, and the king made him prefect of the tribe. The prophet Ahijah encouraged Jeroboam to revolt against his master, but the attempt was nipped in the bud, and Jeroboam fled to Egypt. Here the dynasty to which Solomon's wife belonged had fallen, and Shishak, the founder of the new dynasty, welcomed the refugee. When the Israelite king died, Jeroboam returned to his native land.

Meanwhile a national assembly had met at Shechem, ostensibly to recognise Rehoboam as king. The fact and the place of this gathering show that the northern tribes claimed a decisive voice in the affairs of Israel. Solomon's heir was met by a demand for redress of grievances; the tribes would only recognise him if he surrendered the right of forced labour, which his father had exercised with severity. He refused; the assembly broke up, and its members returned home to organise a revolt. An attempt at coercion failed, and Rehoboam fled to Jerusalem. The Israelites made Jeroboam king.

The Two States.—The revolt was a national movement, supported by the prophets, and its leaders hoped to transfer to Jeroboam the sovereignty over all Israel held by David and Solomon; but for many obvious reasons Judah and Jerusalem remained faithful to the Judahite prince, and thus the great southern tribe resumed its old attitude of aloofness from the general body of Israel.

So long as the two states both existed side by side, the Northern Kingdom possessed the bulk of the territory, population, and resources of Israel. Nevertheless there were advantages on the side of Judah; it held a compact district, with the fortress of Jerusalem for its capital. Moreover, the Southern Kingdom remained steadily loyal to the house of David, while Israel suffered from frequent revolutions, civil wars, and changes of dynasty.

Religious Consequences.—Rehoboam secured the Temple, which remained the sanctuary of the kings of Judah. Jeroboam appropriated the ancient sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan, provided them with new buildings, more numerous priesthoods, and golden images of Yahweh in the form of calves. Many other sanctuaries flourished in both kingdoms.

As usually happens when ecclesiastics promote a revolution, the prophets did not find the new king as docile as they wished. It is very doubtful whether the use of images was regarded as objectionable; but it is probable that Jeroboam, relying on the support of the people generally, countenanced popular superstitions which more enlightened worshippers of Yahweh condemned.

Chronology.—Our information becomes much fuller in this period. Many uncertainties, indeed, remain, but the dates of the reigns given at the head of this and the following chapters are correct within, say, ten or twenty years. The references to the Egyptian Shishak do not help us very much, because the Egyptian documents do not fix dates with certainty.

CHAPTER VIII

WARS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JUDAH

	c. B.C.
Rehoboam . .	932–916
Abijam . . .	916–914
Asa . . .	914–874

	c. B.C.
Jeroboam . .	932–912
Nadab . . .	912–911
Baasha . . .	911–888
Elah . . .	888–887

I. Kings xii.–xvi.

Rehoboam and Jeroboam.—Neither party was willing to acquiesce in the immediate results of the revolution. Rehoboam made preparations to recover the northern territory, but seems to have been hindered by the prophets. Later on he renewed his efforts, at first apparently with some success, for Jeroboam, who had at first fixed his capital at Shechem, transferred the seat of government to Penuel, east of the Jordan. But his patron Shishak intervened, invaded Judah, and effectually crippled Rehoboam's strength, so that Jeroboam was able to establish himself permanently.[1] Later on his capital was at Tirzah, near Shechem, where it remained for several reigns.

[1] This invasion is commemorated in an inscription of Shishak's, but the exact interpretation of the inscription is a little uncertain.

Their Successors.—From this point onwards, name succeeds name in the meagre and fragmentary annals. In most cases they are mere names; little is told us of any of them, and that little is merely public and official; there is nothing that enables us to realise a distinct individuality. Their historian, who wrote at the close of the career of the Southern Kingdom, divides them off into two classes, good and bad, labelling them with one or other of two monotonous formulæ. Either they "did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh," or they "did evil in the sight of Yahweh." The Israelite kings always did evil, some not so consistently as others.

We are not told what the "right" and the "evil" were; but the epithets are used to denote conformity with the historian's religious views or opposition to them, and the occurrence of now the one, now the other, preserves the tradition of a struggle between two parties. We shall see later that, as in modern times, and even more so, certain religious views were closely associated with a certain attitude on home and foreign politics.

The unfavourable judgment on the Northern kings was partly justified by lack of zeal for the more spiritual development of the service of Yahweh; but is largely due to the historian's attachment to the Temple and the house of David.

Let us now turn from these general considerations,

and do our best to combine the various fragmentary references into something like a continuous narrative.

Asa and Baasha.—A tedious undecisive war dragged on between the two states; their mutual relation was similar to that between England and Scotland before the Tudors. For the most part, doubtless, the fighting was on a small scale, harassing border warfare, and occasional raids into the interior.

These civil wars encouraged the Philistines to fresh hostilities, in the course of which they occupied the frontier city of Gibbethon. We find Jeroboam's son and successor, Nadab, soon after his accession, engaged in the siege of this place. Here he was murdered by a certain Baasha ben Ahijah, of the tribe of Issachar, who forthwith massacred all the family of Jeroboam. Baasha also fixed his capital at Tirzah.

Meanwhile Rehoboam had been succeeded by his son, Abijam, and, after a short reign, Abijam had died and given place to his son or brother, Asa. In his days Baasha made a determined attempt to subdue Judah. He set about converting the frontier town of Ramah into a strong fortress, the seat of his government, and the headquarters of his operations against Judah. Asa felt himself no match for the resources of Israel in the hand of a resolute and capable leader; as the Scotch kings turned to France for help against England, Asa sought assistance from Damascus.

The Syrian state of Damascus, restored to independ-

ence during the reign of Solomon, had now developed considerable strength. Its king, Ben-hadad, readily responded to Asa's appeal, and invaded the north of Israel. Baasha withdrew from Ramah to meet this new enemy, and Asa availed himself of the opportunity to destroy the fortifications of Ramah.

After this episode matters reverted to their former condition; Baasha returned to his old capital at Tirzah, where he died, and his son Elah succeeded him. Under Elah we find "all Israel" again besieging Gibbethon under his general Omri. In the second year of his reign, Elah was murdered at Tirzah by Zimri, one of the generals of his chariots, who proclaimed himself king, and massacred the family of Baasha.

CHAPTER IX

THE SYRIAN WARS—I. THE HOUSE OF OMRI

	c. B.C.
Asa	914–874
Jehoshaphat	874–850
Jehoram	850–843
Ahaziah	843

	c. B.C.
Zimri, Omri, Tibni	887
Omri	887–876
Ahab	876–854
Ahaziah	854
Jehoram	854–843

I. Kings xvi.–II. Kings ix.

Date ascertained from Assyrian Inscription.

Ahab takes part in the battle of Karkar, B.C. 854.

Extra-Biblical Sources of Information.

Inscriptions of Shalmaneser II., king of Assyria, B.C. 858–829.

The Moabite Stone, an inscription of Mesha, king of Moab, a contemporary of Ahab and his sons.

Omri.—In Omri and his son Ahab we have two of the most capable of the Israelite kings. Omri had the good fortune to obtain the crown not as the murderer, but as the avenger, of his predecessor, Elah. At the time of Zimri's revolt, Omri was directing the siege of Gibbethon; his army proclaimed him king, and he marched upon the capital. Zimri, feeling that resistance was hopeless,

set fire to the palace and perished in the flames. Another pretender to the throne, however, arose in the person of a certain Tibni; for some time the country was plunged in civil war, and Omri's authority was only fully established after the death of Tibni.

The New Capital.—One great service rendered to Judah by David and Solomon was the transference of the capital to Jerusalem; Omri rendered a similar service to Israel by his choice of Samaria as the seat of government. It was a strong position, in the midst of a fertile district, and remained the permanent capital of Israel. It was repeatedly besieged, usually to no purpose; and the fact that Israel emerged from its long struggle with Damascus, not only independent, but victorious, was largely due to the strength of this fortress.

The Conquest of Moab.—Moab had been conquered by David, but had since regained his independence. The Moabite Stone tells us that because Chemosh, the god of Moab, was angry with his land, he permitted Omri to oppress it many days, and that Omri annexed all the land of Medeba, which remained in the possession of Israel for forty years.

The War with Syria.—The long duel between Israel and Damascus may be said to have begun with Asa's appeal for help against Baasha. The contest was renewed in this reign; Omri had the worst of it, and was compelled to cede cities to Damascus, and to

grant trading facilities to Syrian merchants in Samaria.[1] Nevertheless it is clear that Omri left his kingdom stronger and more prosperous than he found it. The Assyrian inscriptions speak of Israel as "the land of Omri" long after his death, and even call Jehu, who massacred Omri's descendants, "the son of Omri."

Apparently some of the steps which he took to strengthen his government gave offence to the prophetical party; Micah vi. 16 denounces "the statutes of Omri."

Ahab.—Omri was succeeded in due course by his son Ahab. The inspired writers, exclusively concerned for the interests of revealed religion, have mainly noted and emphasised this great king's antagonism to the work of the prophets; and the popular exponents of Christianity have exaggerated the discreditable features of his character and career, and made him out to be a monster of iniquity. He was a man of courage, force of character, and sagacity. Apparently he had not the sympathetic interest in religious affairs which led David to throw his influence on the side of progressive spiritual life and thought. But in morality he was not inferior to Solomon, or even to David; and the clemency of the house of Omri was a proverb amongst the nations—"the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings."[2] The murders of Naboth and of

[1] I. Kings xx. 34; *cf.* "Century Bible."

[2] I. Kings xx. 31.

Uriah were crimes of the same class, and that perpetrated by David was the more heinous.

The Alliance with Judah and Phœnicia.—Among Ahab's many gifts were enlightened views as to international diplomacy. We are not told anything as to the relations of Israel and Judah in the time of Omri.

Asa reigned forty-one years, and was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat, who was like-minded with himself; "he walked in all the ways of Asa his father . . . doing that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh." This continuity of policy would tend to strength and prosperity; and, on the other hand, the revolutions and civil wars in Israel must have stopped any serious operations against Judah. Ahab at last ended the long struggle by a peaceable agreement. The arrangement virtually involved the suzerainty of Israel over the weaker state.

Ahab, however, made no attempt to oust the family of David from their kingdom, but sought to secure their loyalty by intermarriage between the two houses; Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, married Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram. It is noteworthy that the last two kings of the house of Omri, Ahaziah and Jehoram, were contemporary with two kings of Judah named Jehoram and Ahaziah. In this direction Ahab's policy was entirely successful; the kings of Judah remained firm friends of the house of Omri till its fall; and thus Ahab, following in the foot-

steps of David, again united Israel and Judah against their common enemies.

In another direction also Ahab followed the example of David; he renewed the old alliance with Phœnicia by marrying Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, an act which doubtless strengthened the international position of Israel, but had an unfortunate influence on the internal affairs both of Israel and Judah. Ahab also attempted to arrive at a peaceable *modus vivendi* with Damascus, but the attempt failed.

The Syrian Wars.—For this Syrian kingdom of Damascus is constantly found at war with Israel for about a century. Omri, as we have seen, had been worsted by his northern neighbour: and the struggle was renewed in Ahab's reign. But the contest did not simply involve Syria, Israel, and Judah. If these powers had been left to fight it out by themselves, Syria would have succeeded in conquering the two Israelite states. Another power, however, intervened at intervals; in this period the great empire of Assyria again advanced into Western Asia, and we must briefly indicate the main features of its activity.

Just about the time of Omri's accession, an able and warlike king, Ashur-natsir-pal, ascended the Assyrian throne. In a series of successful campaigns the monarch established his authority over an extensive territory; in one expedition he occupied Lebanon, and received the submission of the leading Phœnician cities. His son,

Shalmaneser II., who succeeded him towards the close of Ahab's reign, made a series of determined but unsuccessful attempts to conquer Damascus. This pressure of the Assyrians on Damascus enabled Israel to maintain its independence.

It was perhaps about the time of the accession of Shalmaneser that the Syrian king, Benhadad II., renewed the war by invading the Northern Kingdom and laying siege to Samaria. His army, however, was routed by a successful sally of the besieged Israelites. Later on, Ahab gained a second victory in the open field; took Benhadad prisoner; and concluded a treaty with him on advantageous but moderate terms—practically the restoration of the *status quo* before the defeat of Omri. Possibly we may place soon after these events the great battle of Karkar, of which we learn from an inscription of Shalmaneser II. Shalmaneser was advancing against Damascus from the north, when he was met by Benhadad at Karkar, not far from Hamath. In order to oppose the Assyrians, the king of Damascus had formed an extensive confederation, including Hamath, Israel, Arvad, Arabians, Ammonites, and others. According to the figures given by Shalmaneser, the two largest contingents were Benhadad's 1200 chariots, 1200 horsemen, and 25,000 infantry, and Ahab's 2000 chariots and 15,000 men. The numbers of the Israelites suggests that Ahab was a willing ally. Shalmaneser, in his inscription, claims the victory for himself; but as he did not attack

Damascus, and returned home immediately afterwards, the substantial advantage lay with the confederates—they succeeded in stopping the Assyrian advance.

The alliance between Ahab and Benhadad was short-lived. Amongst the cities taken from Omri which the Syrian king had promised to restore was Ramoth in Gilead. So far the promise had not been fulfilled, and Ahab's patience being exhausted, he determined to take the city by force. He summoned Jehoshaphat to his aid, and the two kings marched against Ramoth. In the battle that ensued, the allies were defeated and Ahab was slain.

This victory had no permanent military results, because soon after Damascus was again engaged in defending itself against Shalmaneser. Moreover, about this time there was a change of dynasty; Benhadad's successor was murdered by his general Hazael, who usurped the kingship. Hence Jehoram, who ruled over Israel after the brief reign of his brother Ahaziah, was able to capture Ramoth and hold it against the Syrians.[1]

The Prophets Elijah and Elisha.—This period was as critical for religion as for politics; and it was a purely

[1] For II. Kings vi. 24–vii. 20 see next chapter, p. 112. The interpretation of the accounts of the Syrian wars is largely a matter of controversy. As the various questions are still *sub judice*, we have mostly taken the Biblical narrative as it stands. Consequently, the version of the story in the text in this and the following chapter is only given as probable.

political act which brought religious affairs to a crisis; and, as in the case of Solomon, the trouble arose out of a royal marriage. As we have already explained,[1] union with a foreign princess arose out of an alliance with her father, and involved the erection of a chapel or sanctuary to a foreign deity for the worship of the queen and her suite. Accordingly, Ahab built in Samaria a temple and altar to Baal—*i.e.* Melkarth, the god of Tyre. The religious history of Israel since the conquest gave a special significance to this act; the Israelites had combined and confused the cult of Yahweh with that of the local Canaanite deities or Baals, "Lords"; and Yahweh Himself was often worshipped under the title "Baal." There was a danger lest the distinctive features of the faith of Moses and of ancient Israel should be lost—worship of Yahweh sink to the level of a mere Canaanite superstition. Samuel and David, the prophets and the kings "who did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh," had fought against this tendency. The prestige of the new royal temple, on the other hand, would encourage the use of "Baal" as a title of the deity, and would make foreign rites fashionable.

It is true that Ahab was a zealous worshipper of Yahweh; he was served by 400 prophets who spoke in the name of Yahweh; and his children bore such names as "Yahweh upholds," "Yahweh is exalted," "Yahweh is high." But names and phrases are not everything.

[1] P. 86.

The new danger met with emphatic protest and stern opposition from the prophets of the purer faith.

At this point we may resume our brief account of the prophets. We have seen that in the time of Samuel and Saul there were bands of ecstatic prophets in Israel, and subsequently we read of individual prophets who appear as messengers of Yahweh. We now hear of guilds or bands of prophets, some supporting Ahab, some in opposition to him. The ordinary prophet was still probably something of a dervish; his inspiration moved him to ecstatic rites; but it also constituted him at times a messenger of Yahweh.

At this time there arose a prophet, Elijah, who placed himself at the head of the opposition to Ahab and Jezebel, and their ecclesiastical policy. His fierce denunciations of the Baal-worship forced men to realise that Yahweh could not be contented with the superstitious rites in which the Canaanite Baals were supposed to delight; and at the same time they threatened the very existence of Jezebel's chapel and even the queen's life; they endangered the alliance with the Phœnicians, and weakened Ahab in his contest with Syria. The struggle was carried on with ruthless cruelty on both sides—each in turn massacred its opponents. But, in spite of his various difficulties, including a severe famine which his opponents interpreted as a Divine judgment, Ahab held his own against Syria and protected Jezebel and her temple till his defeat and death. Even then his

successor Ahaziah maintained his policy, but Ahaziah's premature death, following close on his father's tragic end, seemed conclusive marks of Yahweh's displeasure, and the new king Jehoram made some partial concessions,[1] which served rather to irritate Jezebel than to conciliate the opposition. Elijah's death about this time encouraged the court to persevere in its protection of Baal-worship. But his disciple and successor, the prophet Elisha, organised conspiracies which led to changes of dynasty at Samaria and Damascus, and dealt a fatal blow at the Baal-worship.

Judah and its Southern Neighbours: Jehoshaphat.—During this period Judah was practically the vassal of Israel, but the state of affairs was in many respects an improvement upon the previous years of constant strife between the two kingdoms. Judah retained a full autonomy; the king, Jehoshaphat, enjoyed the confidence of the prophets, and occupied the throne for twenty-five years. The peace with Israel and the long continuous government of a prince sensitive to the higher interests of his people, tended to prosperity. Tribes which despised Judah when it was struggling for its existence against Israel, could not safely defy the two allied states. Edom became subject to Judah; and Jehoshaphat made an unsuccessful attempt to revive Solomon's traffic with Ophir.[2] The subjugation of Edom was perhaps a sequel

[1] II. Kings iii. 2.

[2] I. Kings xxii. 47, 48.

to an invasion of Judah by Edom, Ammon, and Moab, which was victoriously repulsed.[1]

The Revolt of Moab.—This invasion may have been a sequel of the successful revolt of Mesha, king of Moab, against Israel in the middle of Ahab's reign.[2]

Mesha, in his inscription on the Moabite Stone, describes his victory thus :—

"I fought against the town (of Ataroth) and took it, and put to death all the people of the town, as a pleasing spectacle for Chemosh and for Moab ; and I removed thence the altar-hearth [3] of (the god) Dodo, and I (presented) it before Chemosh in Kerioth. . . . And Chemosh said to me, Take Nebo against Israel, and I went by night and fought against it from break of dawn till noon, and I took it and put them all to death. . . . for I had devoted it to Ashtar-Chemosh."

He tells us also of numerous other conquests.

Apparently Ahab was too busy with the Syrian wars to attend to Moab ; but Jehoram had leisure to organise a joint expedition with Jehoshaphat and Edom. The enterprise had many vicissitudes, but at last the allies overran Moab, besieged the Moabite king in Kir-hareseth, and seemed on the point of completing the subjugation

[1] II. Chron. xx.

[2] So the Moabite Stone ; according to II. Kings i. 1, the revolt took place after Ahab's death, a statement which may only mean that the annals made no reference to the revolt till they came to the attempt to reconquer the country after Ahab's death.

[3] 'Ar'el.

of the country by capturing that city. In his dire extremity the king of Moab sacrificed his son to Chemosh on the wall of the besieged city, in sight of the hostile armies. Then the wrath of Chemosh fell upon the invaders,[1] and they withdrew to their own land; they dared not await the response which the patron deity of Moab must surely make to such an appeal. In the reign of Jehoshaphat's successor, Jehoram, Edom finally established its independence; and Libnah also revolted, perhaps to the Philistines.

The Fall of the House of Omri.—This abortive enterprise must have damaged Jehoram's prestige and in some measure contributed to his doom; but other causes were more evidently at work. These we have already dealt with, each in its separate section for the sake of clearness. In reality their workings were intricately intertwined, and their close connection is most manifest in the final catastrophe. The war with Syria led to Jehoram's wound, to his retirement from the field army, and the investing Jehu with an independent command; thus Jehu got his opportunity. The signal of revolt was given by the prophet Elisha. Lastly, owing to the alliance between Israel and Judah, the kings of both states and their families shared the same fate.

[1] See "Century Bible" on II. Kings iii. 27.

CHAPTER X

THE SYRIAN WARS—II. THE HOUSE OF JEHU

	c. B.C.		*c.* B.C.
Jehu	843	Athaliah	843
Jehoahaz	816	Jehoash	837
Jehoash	800	Amaziah	798
Jeroboam II.	785	Azariah or Uzziah	790
Zechariah	745	Regency of Jotham	749

II. KINGS IX.–XV.

Date ascertained from Assyrian Inscriptions.
Jehu pays tribute to Assyria, B.C. 842.

Extra-Biblical Sources of Information.
The "Black Obelisk" and other inscriptions of Shalmaneser II., king of Assyria, B.C. 858–829, and other Assyrian kings.

The Revolution in Israel.—Jehu waded to his throne through seas of blood. He was in command of the Israelite army opposing the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead when a message from Elisha gave him the signal for revolt. He at once made a forced march with a handful of cavalry to Jezreel, where were both Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah; he surprised them, and slew Jehoram on the spot; Ahaziah also was fatally wounded

and died shortly afterwards at Megiddo. As Jehu entered Jezreel, Jezebel's chamberlains, at his bidding, flung their mistress out of a window of the palace and killed her. Then Jehu procured the massacre, first of the family of Ahab, seventy persons, and later on of forty-two kinsmen of the king of Judah. When he himself arrived in Samaria, he completed the work by putting to death "all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria."[1]

So far, he had only carried out the usual policy of a successful rebel, but his obligations to Elisha and the other opponents of Baal-worship required further slaughter. Here a new character appears upon the scene, a certain Jehonadab the son of Rechab, the head of a tribe or sect of fanatics who regarded the developments of civilisation as abominations in the eyes of Yahweh; they refused to grow grapes or corn, and lived in tents, thus maintaining the old nomad life. In the same way they clung to the simpler worship of the nomads, and repudiated the Canaanite superstitions associated with the title Baal. Jehu and Jehonadab together set to work to exterminate the Baal-worshippers. Jezebel's temple to Baal was dismantled and put to ignominious uses, and Jehu "destroyed Baal out of Israel."[2] That is to say, men no longer ventured to carry on the Baal-worship in territory under Jehu's authority. It no doubt continued in secret in obscure corners and in outlying

[1] II. Kings, x. 17. [2] II. Kings x. 28.

districts; and references in *Hosea* and elsewhere show that it revived once more in later times.

Athaliah, Jehoiada, and Joash.—The revolution at Jezreel had an unexpected sequel in Judah. Doubtless when Jehu murdered Ahaziah and his kinsfolk, he hoped to make himself sole king of Israel and Judah. Events at Jerusalem seemed to further his designs. Ahaziah's mother, and therefore the "queen-mother," a most important personage in an ancient Eastern state, was Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. At the death of her son, her daughter-in-law would in the usual course of affairs have become queen-mother, and she herself would have fallen into a position of insignificance. In order to avoid this humiliation she massacred all the remaining members of the royal family that were within her reach, and herself resumed the crown, and maintained her authority for six years. Like Jezebel, Athaliah was a patroness of Baal-worship, for which she maintained a temple and priesthood.

We might have expected that both Jehu's zeal for Yahweh and his personal ambition would have led him to overthrow the daughter of Jezebel, and to take advantage of her massacre of the princes of the house of David by adding Judah to his kingdom. But he had too much on his hands elsewhere; and in spite of religious differences he may have tolerated Athaliah as a tributary till he had time and opportunity to get rid of her. In the sixteenth century, English sovereigns who persecuted

Romanists at home were often allied with foreign Catholic princes.

The fall of Athaliah, however, was due to an internal revolution. She had not done her work so thoroughly as Jehu; for Jehoash, the infant son of Ahaziah, had been concealed by his aunt in a chamber of the Temple and had thus escaped the massacre. For six years he was secretly cared for in the Temple. Then the priest Jehoiada succeeded in obtaining the support of the army, especially of the mercenaries who formed the royal bodyguard and were attached by long-standing tradition to the house of David. Thus backed by an armed force, Jehoiada produced the seven-year-old Joash before the crowds assembled in the Temple on the Sabbath, and anointed him king amidst popular acclamation. Athaliah, venturing into the temple unattended, was seized and put to death, and the people sacked her temple and slew her priest, Mattan.

Jehoiada naturally became regent of Judah during the long minority of Joash, so that he exercised both royal and priestly authority, obviously to the great enhancement of the prestige of the Temple, and to the increase of its privileges and possessions. We can well believe that when Joash became a man Jehoiada was still inclined to keep him in leading-strings, and the young king was anxious to be independent. According to II. Chronicles xxiii., Joash endured the priestly guidance till the death of Jehoiada; but when the new priest,

Jehoiada's son Zechariah, attempted to take his father's place as master of the palace, the king, supported by his nobles, persisted in going his own way, and put Zechariah to death—all of which is very probable.

The Chronicler interpreted as a Divine judgment a disastrous Syrian invasion which happened later on,[1] herein doubtless representing the opinion of the priests and those who sympathised with them, more especially certain conspirators who murdered Joash.[2]

The Wars with Syria.—As Elisha, the instigator of Jehu's rebellion, also suggested the revolution[3] which placed a new dynasty on the throne of Damascus, we might have expected that Hazael, the founder of the new dynasty would have been friendly with Jehu. But this frail personal bond between the two kings was snapped by the strain of international politics, and another long struggle set in between Israel and Syria.

We are only given a bare outline of the main features of the contest, but its character is illustrated by the longer narratives. There were raids such as that in which the "little maid" was carried off to be a slave in Naaman's household, and those other expeditions by which the Syrians sought to capture Elisha. Doubtless, too, the Israelites retaliated in like fashion. Once at

[1] II. Kings xii. 17.

[2] It is doubtful, however, whether the chronology of the reign admits of this close connection in time between the various events.

[3] II. Kings viii. 7–15.

least Samaria was besieged, and was on the point of being starved out, when some sudden alarm compelled the Syrians to raise the siege and beat a hasty retreat.[1]

The general course of this long duel was somewhat as follows. At the beginning of Jehu's reign the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser II., made two expeditions into Syria which had a measure of success, but failed in their main object, the reduction of Damascus. Hazael held his own. We learn from statements of Shalmaneser, inscribed on the Black Obelisk,[2] that on the earlier expedition, in B.C. 842, he received tribute from Jehu; the Obelisk depicts, amongst other scenes, the presentation of this tribute by an Israelite embassy.

But after the second of these two expeditions, the Assyrian kings seem to have been fully occupied in the East for more than thirty years, during the rest of the reign of Jehu, and most of that of his successor, Jehoahaz. Thus Hazael was at liberty to turn his full strength against Israel, and Jehu's submission to Shalmaneser gave him a plausible pretext. The Israelites were altogether overmatched: Hazael occupied all the territory of the eastern tribes, and doubtless many districts of Israel. He even penetrated to the south, captured the Philistine city of Gath, and was only

[1] The narratives in II. Kings iv.–vii. probably belong, for the most part, to the reigns of Jehu and his successor. See Skinner, "Century Bible," *Kings*, pp. 290, 305.

[2] Now in the British Museum.

induced to spare Jerusalem by the payment of heavy tribute. "In those days Yahweh began to cut Israel short." [1]

At first Jehoahaz fared no better than Jehu, and Israel was reduced to great extremities. But towards the end of his reign, renewed Assyrian invasions crippled the power of Damascus, and Israel began to make head against her enemy. "Yahweh gave Israel a saviour." [2] In the next reign, that of Joash, the Israelites won several victories, and recovered some of the lost territory. At last the Assyrians succeeded in taking Damascus, and reducing it to a tributary state. Thus the son of Joash, Jeroboam II., encouraged by the prophet Jonah ben Amittai, was enabled to recover for Israel all its old dominions; he is even said to have recovered Damascus. So "Yahweh saved Israel by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash." [3]

Elisha.—During the most desperate period of the struggle, the prophet Elisha was the heart and soul of the Israelite resistance to Syria. He had followed Elijah in promoting a revival of the exclusive, enthusiastic, almost fanatical zeal for Yahweh; and in the interests of this movement had placed Jehu on the throne. The Baal-worship had been suppressed. According to ancient ideas such a revival should have been followed by national prosperity; and when disasters

[1] II. Kings x. 32. [2] II. Kings xiii. 5. [3] II. Kings xiv. 27.

came one after another, men's faith in Yahweh, or, at any rate, in Elisha's views about Him, must have been sorely tried. Yet he retained his influence, and on his dying bed Joash addressed him as "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof,"[1] and the prophet was able to promise the king some measure of deliverance. The man who kept a brave heart through those many dark days, and maintained the faith and courage of his people must have been one of the most remarkable personalities produced by Israel.

Joash of Israel and Amaziah of Judah.—The brunt of the Syrian war fell upon Israel: Judah, indeed, suffered something from Hazael, but the pre-occupation of the northern kings with Syria prevented them from harassing Judah, and the southern state seems to have enjoyed a considerable measure of independence and prosperity, so much so that Amaziah was able to carry on a successful war with Edom. Elated by this success, he challenged Joash of Israel, but suffered a severe defeat at his hands, and Judah again became tributary to Israel.

[1] II. Kings xiii. 14.

CHAPTER XI

ISRAEL UNDER THE EARLY MONARCHY

The Book of the Covenant, Exodus xx. 22–xxiii. 19

And the other laws and narratives of the older documents of the Pentateuch.[1]

In following the course of the general history, we have reached a point at which the social and religious development of the two kingdoms led to a crisis, which was the occasion of a new outpouring of Divine revelation. Before considering this crisis and its causes, we must glance for a moment at the old order which was about to disappear. It will be simplest to describe the conditions that arose from the establishment of the monarchy —that existed, say, under Solomon and his immediate successors in Israel and Judah, and to reserve the account of subsequent changes for the next chapter. We are fortunate in possessing in the laws and narratives of the older documents of the Pentateuch, and especially the Book of the Covenant, a first-class authority for our present subject. It is true that the documents were

[1] J. and E.; see Dr. Whitehouse's volume in this series on the "Books of the Old Testament."

compiled under the Middle rather than the Early Monarchy; but they are mostly a collection of precedents and rules derived from the common law of the old order, and are not innovations connected with the establishment of a new régime.

Social Conditions.—The Israelites were mainly occupied with agriculture. The commerce which had grown up under Solomon dwindled after the Disruption and the rapid decay of the military power of Israel. A certain trade always went on: its amount and the extent to which it was in native hands varied with the changing fortunes of the state. Thus when Damascus was in the ascendant the Syrians had a trading quarter in Samaria; and a similar privilege was granted to Israelites at Damascus after Ahab's victories. The comparative silence of our authorities on this subject shows that during the period after Solomon, commercial activity was not a prominent feature of the national life—a view that is confirmed by the prohibition of loans at interest.[1]

Similarly, manufactures were mostly domestic; an Israelite homestead was sufficient to itself—did its own spinning and weaving, for instance, and made its own clothes. In towns there were smiths, potters, carpenters, and masons; and a considerable artisan class must have grown up in the capitals and other large cities. We do not know how far the country districts had local craftsmen, and how far they were served by itinerant workers.

[1] Exod. xxii. 25.

Solomon's building was partly done by Phœnician carpenters, masons, and metal workers.[1]

The land belonged to the farmers who cultivated it; we do not read of the hiring of land. There were large estates, but they were comparatively few. On the other hand, there was little extreme poverty amongst freemen.

Slavery existed in Israel as in all ancient communities, but, on the whole, in a mild form. The Israelite slave was better off than an unskilled labourer or a worker in a sweated industry to-day; and slavery provided a refuge for the destitute which was less humiliating to the honest poor than the modern workhouse.

There was not much hired labour on the land, and the hireling was often a *ger* or resident alien.

Internal Politics.—The monarchy secured a large measure of social order, at the expense of a moderate amount of taxation, and occasional acts of tyranny on the part of the king and his officials. The administration of justice was partly tainted by corruption. But we learn from the "Book of the Covenant" that the Israel of the Early Monarchy, in common with other Semitic peoples, sought to apply wise and humane principles, such as those which inspired the Code of Hammurabi.[2]

Local affairs still remained largely in the hands of the local notables, the sheikhs, and the heads of families.

[1] I. Kings v. 18, vii. f.

[2] King of Babylon, *c.* B.C. 2100, usually identified with Amraphal, the contemporary of Abraham.

Religion.—We need only say a word or two on this head, as it is dealt with in another volume of this series.[1] In both kingdoms all Israelites, in differing fashions and with varying degrees of zeal, worshipped Yahweh. The royal sanctuaries at Jerusalem and Bethel enjoyed a certain pre-eminence, but there were others of great importance at Gilgal, Beersheba, Dan, and a multitude of "high places," where sacrifices were offered to the God of Israel. At the same time, the people generally recognised a number of other supernatural beings; probably some sort of ancestor worship prevailed; and the less precise did not feel that loyalty to Yahweh was compromised by supplementary worship of foreign Baals or other deities. In previous chapters we have traced the struggle between these latitudinarians and the champions of a pure, rational, and exclusive worship of the God of Israel. A class of professional prophets, organised in guilds or companies, seem to have played an important part in the advocacy of such worship; though there seem also to have been prophetic guilds under royal patronage who took the opposite side—at any rate in the Northern Kingdom.

Art, Science, and Literature.—The Israelites of the monarchy were not distinguished for pictures or sculpture. The latter art was chiefly applied to making images of Yahweh and other gods; and as this practice was offensive to many of His most devoted worshippers,

[1] See *The Religion of Israel*, by Professor Peake.

probably they, like some other Puritans, discouraged art altogether. The architecture of the Temple and other buildings was, no doubt, borrowed from the Canaanites and other foreign countries. There was some elementary knowledge of arithmetic, geometry, and medicine, of the most primitive character. As far as roads and aqueducts were concerned, there was some acquaintance with engineering. An underground channel for water has been discovered, probably made in the time of Hezekiah, which was the work of two sets of men, starting from opposite ends and meeting in the middle.[1]

There was a considerable literature during this period in the form of poems and popular narratives, embodying the Israelite versions of Semitic folk-lore, and dealing with Israelite heroes and the critical events of history. Collections of customary law were made, and some sort of annals were compiled by the scribes of the royal households and of the great temples. What survives of this literature is either religious, or has been preserved on account of the light it throws on the nature and history of the faith and worship of Israel.[2]

[1] So the Siloam Inscription.

[2] *Cf.* "The Books of the Old Testament."

CHAPTER XII

THE PROPHETS OF EIGHTH CENTURY, AMOS, HOSEA, ISAIAH, AND MICAH

	c. B.C.
Azariah or Uzziah	798
Regency of Jotham	749
Jotham sole ruler	739
Ahaz	735
Hezekiah	720
Manasseh	692

	c. B.C.
Jeroboam II.	785
Zechariah	745
Shallum	745
Menahem	745
Pekahiah	736
Pekah	735
Hoshea	732
Fall of Samaria	722

II. KINGS XV.–XXI., AMOS, HOSEA, ISAIAH I.–XXIII., XXVIII. f., MICAH I.–III.

Extra-Biblical Sources of Information.

The inscriptions of the Assyrian kings, from which the following dates are fixed:—

	B.C.
Menahem pays tribute	738
Population of Galilee carried captive by Tiglath-Pileser	733
Damascus taken by the Assyrians	732
Fall of Samaria	722
Invasion of Sennacherib	701

Social and other Changes.—The Israel sketched in the last chapter was the starting-point of a process which was already beginning under Solomon, or even

earlier, and which reached a climax in the eighth century. A central government, maintained continuously for any length of time, creates a governing class of officials, nobles, and men of wealth, who exploit the material progress of the country, "the advance of civilisation," in the interests of themselves, their friends, and relations. Occasional changes of dynasty and other revolutions simply change the *personnel* of this class. Methods in the ancient East were crude; sheer exercise of royal authority could do something;[1] and where that failed, the judges were usually amenable to suitable means of persuasion. At the outset, as we have said, the Israelite farmers owned their land; but as time went on, the number of large estates rapidly increased; by fair means or foul, great landowners ousted the yeomen from their farms. These, dispossessed of the inheritance of their fathers, were either reduced to slavery, or became landless paupers. The new order had not yet sufficiently developed to provide a place and a livelihood for them.

At the same time, the advance of civilisation led to more luxurious habits of living amongst the wealthy and their dependants, together with a relaxing of the more austere moral conventions of primitive times.

The priests of the great sanctuaries, as wealthy and dignified ecclesiastics, would be associated by many ties of interest and sympathy with the other notables,

[1] I. Sam. viii. 11–18.

to the detriment of their moral and spiritual influence. The ritual, no doubt, was profuse, elaborate, and splendid; but too often it was a substitute for devotion to God, for a pure life, and for justice and benevolence towards men.[1] The priests were too much concerned for the comfort and culture they shared with their wealthy friends to be very strongly moved by the distress of the poor, or the growing corruption of the nation. These tendencies to luxury and vice were reinforced by the influence of international relations, especially with Assyria, which promoted foreign fashions, and encouraged the constant inclination of the Israelites to adulterate the worship of Yahweh with heathen superstitions. The development of material progress and social corruption was fostered and brought to a head by the prosperity of the long reigns of Jeroboam II. of Israel and Uzziah of Judah.

Amos and Hosea.—Thus, once more, there was serious danger lest the ethical and spiritual religion associated with faith in Yahweh, the fruit of earlier revelation, should be reduced to the level of neighbouring cults; and the national worship of Israel should become a mere instrument of government, and the expression of a narrow and selfish patriotism. The influential classes were not conscious of anything wrong; they thought that they were on the best of

[1] Amos iv. 4–5, v. 21–24; Isa. i.; Hosea vi. 9, viii. 11–14; Micah iii. 11.

terms with Yahweh. Were they not assiduous and munificent in their offerings to Him? Was not their prosperity an outward and visible token of His approval? At this crisis God raised up a new succession of prophets, with a new message for the times. Yahweh was not satisfied with ritual, however exclusive and correct; He was no tyrant, hungry for homage and tribute. Thus saith Yahweh, "I will have benevolence and not sacrifice."[1] Henceforth one of the chief demands which the prophets and priests, whom we recognise as the inspired teachers of revealed truth, made in the name of Yahweh, was for an equitable social order. History and tradition led them to look for such a system in a restoration of the old state of affairs in which the Israelite freeman owned the land he cultivated; but the principle for which they contended was that the national resources should be used to secure a worthy life for all, and not to minister to the arrogance and self-indulgence of a privileged few.

The new prophets also attacked the sanctuaries, partly because the worship was external and divorced from any spirit of justice, purity, and benevolence; partly because the ritual in itself was corrupt. In earlier times images of one kind or another, and various symbols of the Deity,

[1] Hosea vi. 6. We have no English equivalent of the word *hesedh*, represented by "benevolence"; it includes loyalty, benevolence, and beneficence. G. A. Smith renders it by "leal love."

had been freely used in the sanctuaries of Yahweh; but now they were expressly condemned.[1]

A blow was also struck at a cherished article of faith, the belief in Yahweh as the Divine champion who would always protect and deliver His people if only He were duly propitiated by sacrifices. It was now taught that to be the people of Yahweh was not only a privilege; it was also a heavy responsibility. Yahweh was just and beneficent, and expected His people to be like Himself. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities."[2]

Doubtless these truths belonged in a measure to an old tradition; but as they were now stated they came to most men as unwelcome novelties. We have already seen traces of division between the prophetic guilds. From this point onwards the guilds, the professional prophets as a body, became more and more identified with the lower forms of the worship of Yahweh, which were very generally regarded as the established religion, supported by a conservative tradition. The inspired prophets, whose words have been recorded for us, had sympathisers—but they represented a small minority of their order.[3] Most of the prophets were nationalist, and clung to the faith in the Divine champion.

Another new feature is the combination of literature

[1] Isa. x. 11. [2] Amos iii. 2.
[3] Amos vii. 14; Hosea ix. 7, 8.

and prophecy; the utterances of the new prophets were committed to writing either by themselves or their disciples.

This movement first made itself felt in the Northern Kingdom in the reign of Jeroboam II.; Amos, a herdsman, or more probably a grazier, of Tekoa in Judah, appeared at the royal sanctuary at Bethel, and made a violent attack upon the king, and announced the coming captivity of the people. Driven from thence, he continued to denounce the social, moral, and religious corruption of the times. His efforts were seconded and continued by Hosea, who had suffered in his own family from the prevalent immorality.

The Fall of Samaria.—It was under such conditions that the Northern Kingdom was called upon to enter on its death-struggle with Assyria. Up to a certain point, the Assyrian advance had crippled Damascus, and left Jeroboam II. free to restore Israel to something of its ancient power. But the swelling tide would inevitably sweep onward and swallow up Israel. Submission as a loyal and faithful tributary might have enabled it to survive; this policy was tried, but not persisted in.

The dynasty of Jehu perished with Jeroboam's son and successor, Zachariah; and after a second revolution and a bloody civil war a certain Menahem established himself on the throne, and purchased the support of Assyria by a heavy tribute, mentioned both in *Kings* and in the Assyrian inscriptions. We gather from the details

in the Old Testament that there were at this time 60,000 men of means—*i.e.*, probably landowners, in Israel.

Menahem's son, Pekahiah, was murdered after a short reign by Pekah, apparently a Gileadite. The new king joined with Rezin of Damascus in revolting against Assyria, and in an unsuccessful attempt to make Judah join their confederacy.[1] The revolt was speedily suppressed by Tiglath-Pileser, who took Damascus, and carried off captive the population of Gilead and Galilee. Pekah was murdered, and the last king of Israel, Hoshea ben Elah, installed as a tributary of Assyria.

But at this point Egypt reappeared upon the scene. During the greater part of the period of the monarchy Egypt had been weakened by internal troubles; now, however, a new dynasty [2] had arisen, and, having established its power at home, began to interfere in the affairs of Western Asia. The unfortunate Hoshea, tempted by the prospect of Egyptian help, revolted against Assyria; no help came, and he was deposed and imprisoned. His capital, Samaria, endured a three years' siege before it surrendered.

With the fall of Samaria, the Northern Kingdom came to an end. The bulk of the people were transported to various districts of Assyria, and were lost in the heathen population. On the other hand, immigrants from distant regions were settled in Northern Israel, hence-

[1] *Cf.* below, p. 129.

[2] Twenty-fifth (Ethiopian).

forward known as Samaria. The new-comers eventually amalgamated with the remnant of the Israelites left behind in the land; this hybrid race adopted a corrupt form of the worship of Yahweh, and ultimately became the people and sect of the Samaritans.

There is evidence which seems to show that the territory, or a portion of it, was again organised as a state tributary to Assyria after these events.

Isaiah and Micah.—The social and religious condition of Judah was not materially different from that of Israel; and prophets appeared in Judah with substantially the same message as that of Amos and Hosea. Two names have come down to us, Isaiah and Micah. Micah is chiefly known by the fragments of his teaching preserved in the book which bears his name; but we have something like a biography of Isaiah. He was called to the prophetic office as a young man, about the time of the death of Uzziah, 739 B.C., and continued his ministry for some forty years or more, till after the invasion of Sennacherib, in 701 B.C. While Micah represented the country districts, Isaiah lived and taught in Jerusalem, in close relations with the court, and the Temple and its priesthood. He was a married man with a family, but he was so absorbed in his mission that he labelled his children with names—"The spoil speedeth, he prey hasteth," and "The remnant shall return"[1]—that summed up two leading features of his early

[1] Maher-Shalal-hash-baz, Shear-Jashub.

teaching, the imminence of a disastrous invasion, and the ultimate salvation of a remnant.

As Elisha had guided with his counsels the earlier kings of the house of Jehu, so Isaiah sought to direct the policy of Ahaz and Hezekiah, but with less success. The later prophet's demands were more exacting, and less in accordance with what seemed the obvious interests of his country. The immediate effect of the first years of his ministry was chiefly confined to a small circle of disciples;[1] and it was only towards the end of his career that he exercised a decisive influence on the fortunes of Judah.[2]

Isaiah possessed many and varied gifts; he was a man of affairs, a statesman, and a patriot; he was an eloquent speaker, and one of the world's greatest poets; he had a large share in bringing about important and indispensable reforms in the ecclesiastical system of Judah.[3] He was equally distinguished as a man of profound spiritual experience and a theological thinker; the Divine message with which he was inspired marks a distinct step in the development of pure, ethical monotheism.

The Deliverance from Sennacherib.—In considering the fortunes of Judah, the sphere of Isaiah's work, we have to retrace our steps somewhat. We have already brought the history of the Southern Kingdom to the reign of Uzziah.[4] In his later years Uzziah was afflicted with leprosy, and the government was carried on by his

[1] Isaiah viii.–xvi. 18.
[2] *Cf.* below, p. 131.
[3] *Cf.* below, p. 132.
[4] *Cf.* p. 122.

son Jotham, who succeeded him. The ecclesiastical policy of these two rulers was in the main favourable to the higher interests of the national faith. But the next king, Ahaz, was more lax in his religious views and practices; "he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel."[1] His refusal to join in the confederacy against Assyria[2] brought upon Judah a devastating invasion and an unsuccessful siege of the capital. It was probably in connection with this siege that Ahaz "made his son to pass through the fire"—*i.e.* offered him as a sacrifice to Yahweh, as the king of Moab on a similar occasion offered his son to Chemosh.[3] The siege was raised, and the Assyrian campaign against Israel and Damascus relieved Judah of all further anxiety. Ahaz, as the tributary of Assyria—a connection against which Isaiah protested in vain—attended the court of the Assyrian king at Damascus; and subsequently made various changes in the equipment of the Temple at Jerusalem which were probably distasteful to the advocates of pure worship.

During the closing period of the reign of Ahaz, Judah was the spectator of the last agony of Samaria,[4] without making any attempt to help.[5] This attitude may have been partly due to the persistent hostility of the new prophet to the government of Israel.

[1] II. Kings xvi. 3. [2] *Cf.* above, p. 126. [3] II. Kings iii. 27.

[4] The chronological data at this point are very difficult to co-ordinate; see "Century Bible," *Kings*, p. 385. Here, as elsewhere, the dates for this period are taken from p. 51 of that volume.

[5] As far as our information goes.

The position of the next king of Judah, Hezekiah, was extremely difficult; his realm was tributary to Assyria, and that empire claimed suzerainty over the whole of Palestine. But Egypt, a near neighbour, and of late years again a formidable power, was eager to regain its old possessions in Asia; its diplomacy constantly sought to make trouble for Assyria by stirring up its subjects to revolt, and at any moment an Egyptian army might appear upon the scene. Moreover, the Assyrian empire was become unwieldy through the multiplication of subject states, always ready to revolt. The political equilibrium was very unstable, and called for more statesmanship than Hezekiah possessed.

At first things went well: Hezekiah remained loyal to Assyria, and it was probably the advance southwards of the Assyrian king, Sargon, and his victory over an Egyptian army in Philistine territory, that enabled Hezekiah to obtain advantage over the Philistines.

But when the Assyrian army had departed, and Sargon was occupied by troubles at home, the south Palestinian states, instigated by Egypt, again became restless. At the same time Babylon, the most important tributary of Assyria, was in revolt, and its king, Merodach-Baladan, sent ambassadors to Hezekiah, and doubtless also to his neighbours, with the obvious intention of forming a confederacy against Sargon.[1] The cordial reception given

[1] This incident is misplaced in *Kings* and the dependent accounts in *Isaiah* and *Chronicles*.

to this embassy lends support to the charge made by an Assyrian inscription against Judah of joining Edom, Moab, and Philistia in offering to transfer their allegiance from Assyria to Egypt. But the movement was speedily quelled by an Assyrian expedition, and Hezekiah submitted in time to avoid any serious penalty.

From this time onwards Isaiah and the prophets of his party, and so later on Jeremiah and Ezekiel, oppose any alliance with Egypt.

When, in B.C. 705, Sargon was succeeded by Sennacherib, there was a general revolt of the Palestinian peoples against Assyria. Sennacherib was not able to attend to Palestine till B.C. 701; then he conducted a successful series of operations till he reached Philistia, where he defeated an Egyptian army at Eltekeh. Hezekiah, as usual, submitted when the Assyrians entered Judah. But not content with levying a heavy fine, Sennacherib demanded the surrender of Jerusalem. Encouraged by Isaiah, the Jewish king ventured to refuse, and his faith was rewarded by a signal deliverance. An unexpected calamity, also mentioned by the Greek historian Herodotus, compelled Sennacherib to beat a hasty retreat, and Jerusalem was saved.[1]

[1] According to Herodotus, the Assyrian bow-strings were destroyed by mice, a statement understood by some as a figure for a pestilence. According to II. Kings xix. 7, Sennacherib's hasty retreat was due to bad news from home. The silence of the Assyrian annals as to this disaster is no argument against its historicity.

Although the capital escaped, the country had been laid waste; Sennacherib tells us that he captured forty-six walled towns, and carried away more than two hundred thousand captives.

The part played by Isaiah in this crisis gave him a predominating influence in the royal counsels, and Hezekiah reformed the public worship at the Temple and elsewhere according to the principles advocated by the prophet and his adherents.[1] Amongst other reforms, the king destroyed an image, possibly of Yahweh, in the shape of a copper serpent, reputed to have been made by Moses, and hitherto kept in the Temple as an object for worship.

[1] These reforms are placed by *Kings*, &c., earlier in the reign, probably owing to a very simple misunderstanding of the original sources.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REFORMS OF JOSIAH

	c. B.C.
Manasseh	692
Amon	638
Josiah	637
Jehoahaz	607

II. KINGS XXI.–XXIII.

Extra-Biblical Sources of Information.
Inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Asshurbanipal, kings of Assyria; Herodotus, ii. 159.

The Reaction under Manasseh.—The reforms of Hezekiah rested on royal authority rather than on popular sympathy and conviction. Under his son Manasseh the party opposed to Isaiah—a party which no doubt regarded itself as conservative and orthodox—regained power, and promptly reversed the policy of Hezekiah by restoring all the time-honoured superstitions. Moreover, the tendency to eclecticism,[1] which Israel shared with most ancient peoples, received a fresh stimulus from Judah's dependence on Assyria. During the earlier part of Manasseh's reign the supremacy of Assyria in Western Asia was not seriously challenged; and Esarhaddon and

[1] *i.e.* the combining of the worship and faith of different religions.

Asshurbanipal conducted successful campaigns against Egypt, and made its rulers their vassals.

An inscription of Esarhaddon's tells us that he received tribute from Manasseh. An almost inevitable consequence of Assyrian suzerainty was the recognition of Assyrian cults at Jerusalem. The Temple, as the royal chapel, was the natural place in which to give effect to the official deference to the claims of the dominant power. Altars to the "host of heaven"—gods of the sun and of the moon and the astral deities who were conspicuous in the Assyrian Pantheon—were erected in the courts of the Temple. Such an encroachment upon the rights of Yahweh provoked fierce opposition; probably there were riots, or even an organised insurrection, which were suppressed by ruthless massacres.[1] Apparently the religious policy of the court continued mainly on the lines laid down by Manasseh through the short reign of his successor Amon, and during the minority of Josiah.

[1] According to II. Chron. xxxiii. 11–13, Manasseh was at one time a prisoner in Babylon (then subject to Assyria), which is quite probable. But, as Dr. Skinner says (*Kings*, p. 406), "the further statement that he repented and reversed the policy of his earlier reign is harder to believe in face of the silence of Kings." *Kings* also implies that Manasseh's eclectic policy prevailed till Josiah's reforms. Perhaps Manasseh on his return to Jerusalem made some concessions, without altering the general character of his policy. He may have removed the obnoxious altars from the Temple and placed them elsewhere.

The Reforms of Josiah.—Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight years; it is not improbable that during his minority the government was still in the hands of the anti-prophetic party,[1] and that, as often happens, the young sovereign only achieved his independence by throwing himself into the arms of the opponents of the Regency—*i.e.* in this case, by identifying himself with the prophetic party.

It appears that in the eighteenth year of Josiah repairs were in progress at the Temple, and the king's secretary Shaphan went to make arrangements for paying the work-people. While he was there the priest Hilkiah said to him, "I have found the book of the law in the Temple," and gave him the book in question. Shaphan read it, and took it with him, and read it to the king.

The book contained more or less of our *Deuteronomy*, more especially the legislative portions.[2] This work confirmed the social and religious teaching of Isaiah and his supporters, and condemned the abuses that were current in Judah. It promised blessings to those who

[1] It is convenient to use the term "prophetic party" to denote the adherents of Isaiah and Jeremiah and their teaching, and the term "anti-prophetic party" to denote their opponents; but as a matter of fact the professional prophets as a class belonged to what we call the "anti-prophetic party."

[2] The substance of Deut. xii.–xxvi., and probably xxvii., or something corresponding to it; but see on *Deuteronomy* in the "Books of the Old Testament" in this series.

obeyed its ordinances, and pronounced curses upon those who disobeyed.

As the king listened, he felt that he was hearing the Divine sentence pronounced against his country, and he rent his clothes. But lest this book should be without authority, he sent an important deputation to a certain prophetess Huldah to inquire of Yahweh concerning the matter. Huldah entirely confirmed the teaching of the book.

Then Josiah called a general assembly of the people in the Temple, and read the book to them, and made them enter into a solemn covenant with Yahweh to observe its commands. Forthwith he himself set about making a clean sweep of all that was unworthy and superstitious in the worship of the people. The catalogue shows how extremely slight and partial all previous reformations must have been: for instance, the temples which Solomon had built for foreign deities were still standing on the Mount of Olives.

Now, however, the "high places," the numerous sanctuaries which had become centres of superstitious worship, were suppressed; and the Temple of Jerusalem, purged of similar corruptions, was henceforth to be the only legitimate shrine of Yahweh.

Defeat and Death of Josiah.—If time and opportunity had been given, it is possible that these reforms might have proved a powerful influence for good on the life of Judah; but a great revolution was in progress in inter-

national politics which involved the speedy ruin of king and people. During the reign of Josiah the Assyrian empire was rapidly crumbling away; its strength was shaken by a devastating invasion of hordes of Scythian barbarians, and its supremacy was challenged by the growing power of Media and Babylon. Josiah himself ventured to extend his authority over portions of the territory of the Northern Kingdom; and naturally Egypt sought to regain her dominion in Syria. The Egyptian king, Necho, marched into Palestine on his way to the Euphrates; Josiah, perhaps influenced by the hostility of the prophetic party towards Egypt, met him in battle, and was defeated and slain.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAH

	c. B.C.
Jehoahaz	607
Jehoiakim	607
Jehoiachin	597
Zedekiah	597
Fall of Jerusalem	587

	c. B.C.
Fall of Nineveh	607
Battle of Carchemish	605
Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon	604

II. Kings xxiii. 31–xxv. 30, Jeremiah, Ezekiel i.–xxiv., Lamentations.

The Egyptian Suzerainty.—On the death of Josiah, his son Jehoahaz was made king; but the Egyptians were now, for the time, masters of Syria, and Jehoahaz, for some unspecified reason, failed to obtain the favour of Necho, who deposed him, and carried him a prisoner to Egypt, where he died.

Necho placed his elder brother Eliakim on the throne of Judah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. The new king paid a heavy tribute to his suzerain. We are told concerning Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim that they "did evil in the sight of Yahweh," or, in other words, the religious policy of Josiah was reversed, and the worship of Yahweh was again adulterated by the corruptions of heathen superstition.

Probably Josiah had not carried the people with him; his reforms had been effected by a high-handed exercise of royal authority, and his death was followed by a reaction. Moreover, popular theology would see in his defeat and death a Divine condemnation of his policy; and this sentiment would be reinforced by the influence of the Egyptian suzerain; Necho's nominee, Jehoiakim, would be appointed on condition that he suppressed the prophetic, anti-Egyptian party—a condition which he loyally fulfilled to the best of his ability.

Jeremiah.—The main obstacle to the carrying out of this policy was the prophet Jeremiah. The other prophets of this period, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk, are mere names to us; but we know more of Jeremiah than of most of the characters of the Old Testament history. He received his call to the prophetic ministry when a mere youth, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah,[1] *c.* B.C. 625. About that time the Scythians were sweeping over Western Asia, and the young prophet's soul was stirred to deliver a message of judgment upon his people.

A few years later came the reforms of Josiah, which may have been partly due to the preaching of Zephaniah and Jeremiah, but the reference of the question of the value of *Deuteronomy* to the prophetess Huldah shows that neither of these prophets was regarded as the chief authority in such matters. Similarly the

[1] Jer. i. 2, 6.

policy which led to Josiah's ill-fated contest with Necho was probably more the result of other influences than of any encouragement the king may have received from Jeremiah. The religious reaction which ensued threw the prophet permanently into opposition to the government. Thus for the next twenty years Jeremiah waged an incessant war against the religious, social, and moral corruption of Judah in opposition alike to king, princes, priests, prophets, and people. The old prophetic party seems to have been disabled from any open action. Jeremiah had indeed influential friends who were able to afford him a measure of personal protection; as far as public support was concerned, he could always rely on his disciple Baruch; otherwise he stood almost alone. He was hopelessly at variance with national feeling, for his sense of the religious and political needs of Judah made him an avowed enemy of Egypt and partisan of Babylon at a time when Jewish patriots looked to Pharaoh as their chief ally in a last desperate struggle for independence against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah saw no prospect of salvation for Judah, and his preaching became more and more gloomy and threatening, a message of imminent doom. He was naturally confronted with violent opposition; he was beaten and imprisoned, and his life was frequently endangered. The only wonder is that he survived so long; doubtless he owed much to his impressive personality and to the awe with which religious enthusiasm is regarded in the East.

Amid his heavy trials he was denied the comfort of domestic affection; he was divinely forbidden to marry.[1]

In spite of everything he persevered with heroic constancy, the outcome of a life-long spiritual agony, in which his faith was maintained by frequent wrestling with God. His career is summed up thus:[2] "Behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the king of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee. For I am with thee, saith Yahweh, to deliver thee."

The Babylonian Suzerainty.—We shall have occasion to refer to the activity of Jeremiah, in tracing the subsequent history, but for the present we must recur to the course of international politics after the death of Josiah. For a while the Egyptians remained masters of Syria; but about this time the allied Medes and Babylonians took Nineveh; the Assyrian empire utterly collapsed and finally disappeared, and its place as the dominant power of Western Asia was taken by Babylon. Pharaoh-Necho ventured to challenge this new supremacy, but he suffered a severe defeat at Carchemish on the Euphrates at the hands of the Babylonian crown-prince, Nebuchadnezzar, and was compelled to resign his Asiatic conquests and retire into Egypt. Thus the various states of Syria, in-

[1] Jer. xvi. 2. [2] Jer. i. 18, 19.

cluding Judah, became dependent upon Babylon, though, as of old, Egypt still cherished hopes of regaining her ancient possessions, and was always ready to encourage disaffection amongst the tributaries of her successful rival.

Jehoiakim.—Nebuchadnezzar was recalled from the pursuit of Pharaoh-Necho by the death of his father, and the necessity of establishing his own authority at Babylon; Syria was left to itself for a time, but after a while Nebuchadnezzar appeared upon the scene, and Jehoiakim submitted to him. It argues some adroitness on the part of the Jewish king that, having been the nominee of Pharaoh, he succeeded in getting his title confirmed by Nebuchadnezzar. Indeed, all our information indicates that Jehoiakim possessed considerable ability and force of character.

The change of suzerains did not seriously affect the religious policy of the Jewish government, and indeed, in spite of formal submission to Babylon, the sympathies of Jehoiakim and his ministers were wholly with Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar's omission to place the anti-Egyptian, prophetic party in power by replacing Jehoiakim by a nominee of his own, devoted to the interests of Babylon, was a serious oversight, which caused him much trouble, and rendered the fall of the Jewish kingdom inevitable. Apparently the Babylonian king had not sufficient leisure to make himself fully acquainted with the domestic politics of a petty Syrian State.

Probably Jehoiakim, who had managed to derive ad-

vantages from both Egypt and Babylon, attempted some sort of compromise between the prophetic and anti-prophetic parties. At any rate Josiah's reformation still exercised a certain influence in an unsatisfactory fashion. That reformation had enhanced the prestige of the Temple by making it the only legitimate place of worship; though Jehoiakim did not maintain its exclusive rights, he would naturally be willing to promote the supreme importance of a sanctuary which was his royal chapel, under his personal control. Hitherto the Temple had enjoyed special Divine protection; when all the other great Israelite sanctuaries had suffered from the devastating invasions of the Assyrians, it alone had escaped. The people had come to regard it as the national palladium; Yahweh must protect His chosen dwelling-place, and therefore Jerusalem was safe. Against this doctrine Jeremiah protested; at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign he betook himself to the Temple courts, probably on a feast-day, and announced that if Judah did not repent, the Temple would be laid in ruins like the ancient sanctuary of Shiloh. He was met by an outburst of popular indignation, and only owed his life to the protection of powerful friends. Another prophet, Urijah ben Shemaiah, who supported Jeremiah, was less fortunate; he fled to Egypt, but the Egyptian authorities gave him up to Jehoiakim, and he was put to death.[1]

[1] Jer. vii. 1–15, xxvi.

Some three or four years later[1] Jeremiah made another protest: from some cause or other he could not himself appear in the Temple, but he dictated to Baruch the various prophecies he had uttered against Israel, Judah, and other nations; and by his directions Baruch read the contents of this document or "roll" to the people in the Temple. The matter came to the ears of Jehoiakim's ministers; they sent for Baruch, made him read them the roll, and were much disturbed by the threats it contained. Having bidden Jeremiah and Baruch hide themselves, they reported the matter to the king, perhaps hoping that this roll might affect him as the law-book found in the Temple had moved Josiah. Jehoiakim had the roll read to him, but he listened with contemptuous indifference; and cut the roll in pieces and burnt it. Then he ordered the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch, "but Yahweh hid them."

The prophet occupied his enforced seclusion by dictating to his disciple a new edition of his prophecies, with suitable additions.

Jeremiah's complaints against Jehoiakim were not merely on the score of religious practices. "Thine eyes and thine heart," he declares, "are wholly given up to thy covetousness, and the shedding of innocent blood, and to oppression and violence." One particular form of oppression is singled out for special censure. The right of the *corvée*, of exacting forced labour without

[1] Jer. xxxvi.

wages, has always been exercised by Eastern rulers, and was freely used by Solomon; it appears that, in spite of the troubles of the times, Jehoiakim set about building himself a magnificent palace, and Jeremiah says of him: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire."[1]

Possibly the same grasping spirit led Jehoiakim to grudge the payment of tribute to his suzerain; and at some time when Nebuchadnezzar was occupied elsewhere, and there seemed a prospect of help from Egypt, the Jewish king rebelled. Rebellion, in its initial stage, was simple, easy, and attractive; it consisted in refraining from sending the tribute-money to Babylon. In this case, Jehoiakim's calculations were correct up to a certain point; the Babylonian king was too busy to attend to the matter in person. The only Chaldean forces he could spare to act against Judah were detachments from neighbouring garrisons. But he also let loose upon the rebel city such of its neighbours as could be attracted by the prospect of plunder, or the desire of standing well with Babylon—bands of Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. Such enemies could not take Jerusalem; but they harassed the Jews, wore out their strength; exhausted their resources, and prevented the revolt from spreading.

[1] Jer. xxii. 13–17.

Before Nebuchadnezzar was able to march against Judah with a regular army, Jehoiakim died.

The Captivity of Jehoiachin, B.C. 597.—Thus the penalty of Jehoiakim's rebellion fell upon his son and successor Jehoiachin, a youth of eighteen. Soon after his accession a Babylonian army appeared, and formed the siege of Jerusalem; somewhat later Nebuchadnezzar arrived, and took over the command. Whereupon Jehoiachin surrendered. The Babylonian king took drastic measures to secure himself against another revolt. He carried away captive to Babylon the king, his chief officers, and the *élite* of the population: and over the remnant he set up as king another son of Josiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, whose name he changed to Zedekiah.

Zedekiah was amiable, but feeble; his personal sympathies were with Jeremiah and the prophetic party, and he desired to keep faith with his suzerain; but he was overborne by his officials and nobles, and by the impracticable nationalism of the people. Nebuchadnezzar had not been wisely advised in his selection of captives to be taken to Babylon; by taking the best of the leading men, he had removed the influential members of the prophetic party, who advocated loyalty. At the same time, he had left behind some of the leaders of the Egyptian, anti-prophetic party, which was always looking for an opportunity to rebel.

So far as the religious policy of Jehoiakim was altered,

it was changed for the worse. In these last desperate days, fanaticism ran riot. For the time being, the purer faith in Yahweh represented by Jeremiah was discredited by the tragic end of its champion Josiah; and the repeated calamities of the nation shook men's faith in the national God. Therefore some revived the ancient worship of Baal, some sought the "Queen of Heaven" or the Sun or other Babylonian deities, and some worshipped forms of creeping things and abominable beasts like the Egyptians. The Temple itself was the headquarters alike of the worship of Yahweh and these other cults.[1]

A sober secular policy was hardly likely to issue from this confused excitement. After a few years a conspiracy against Babylon was formed amongst a number of Syrian states—Judah, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Zidon. Jeremiah's protests were overborne by the assertions of Hananiah and other prophets that Yahweh would prosper the enterprise.[2] However, the conspiracy came to nothing at the time. Probably the Babylonian government got wind of the matter, and it collapsed before the threat of a Chaldean invasion. Zedekiah seems to have been summoned to Babylon to give an account of himself, and to have escaped with a warning.[3]

Later on, however, Judah openly rebelled, buoyed up by the hope of support from Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar

[1] Ezekiel viii. [2] Jer. xxvii. f.
[3] Jer. li. 59.

marched into Palestine, and, through the influence of fear, the prophetic party obtained the upper hand for the moment; a new reformation was set on foot, and, as an earnest of repentance, slaves of Hebrew birth who had served for six years were set free in accordance with the Deuteronomic law,[1] and their freedom was guaranteed by a solemn covenant. At this juncture an Egyptian army advanced into Palestine; and Nebuchadnezzar raised the siege of Jerusalem in order that he might deal with these new enemies. Forthwith the Egyptian party regained control; the covenant was thrown to the winds; the unfortunate slaves were dragged back to their old servitude. Jeremiah, after protesting in vain against this iniquity, attempted to leave the city, and betake himself to his native Anathoth; but he was arrested at the gate, beaten, and thrown into prison on a charge of deserting to the Chaldeans. The princes, who practically constituted the government, were anxious to do away with him; and at one time left him to starve or be suffocated in the deep mud at the bottom of a disused cistern. But the king ventured to have him pulled up and confined in the court of the guard.

Meantime Nebuchadnezzar had driven the Egyptians out of Palestine, and the Chaldeans returned and re-formed the siege of Jerusalem. The Jews offered a desperate resistance, and kept the besiegers at bay for a year and a half. Zedekiah more than once sent for the

[1] Deut. xv. 12–18; Exod. xxi. 1–6.

imprisoned prophet and secretly consulted him. Jeremiah advised the king to surrender; but Zedekiah had not courage to take this decisive step.

During this period Jeremiah bought certain land at Anathoth as a token of the ultimate restoration of the Jews to their own country; just as when Hannibal encamped near Rome, the land he occupied was sold by auction at its full value.

But Nebuchadnezzar was more fortunate than Hannibal; the supply of food in the city became exhausted, and a breach was made in the walls; Zedekiah, with a small following, broke through the lines of the besiegers, but was pursued and taken. Later on he was brought before Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, his two sons were slain in his presence, his eyes were put out, and he was carried in chains to Babylon.

We gather from *Lamentations* that Jerusalem suffered all the horrors attendant on the sack of a captured city. Then about a month later, Nebuzaradan, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's bodyguard, was sent to superintend the systematic destruction of the city; the Temple and all the more important buildings were destroyed, the walls were broken down; what was left of the Temple treasures, and most of the remaining population, were removed to Babylon: "So Judah was carried away captive out of his land."[1] Thus ended the surviving Israelite monarchy.

[1] II. Kings xxv. 21.

CHAPTER XV

THE CAPTIVITY

	c. B.C.
Captivity of Jehoiachin	597
Ezekiel	593–571
Fall of Jerusalem	586
Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon	561
Nergal-Sharezer king of Babylon	559
Cyrus, king of Persia	558
Nabonidus, king of Babylon	555
Cyrus conquers the Medes	550
Cyrus conquers Lydia	546
Publication of Isaiah xl.–lv. "Second Isaiah," about this time.	
Cyrus takes Babylon	539
Return of the Jews	538

JEREMIAH XL.–XLIV., EZEKIEL, ISAIAH XL.–LV.

II. KINGS XXV. 23–28.

Extra-Biblical Authorities.

Inscriptions of the last Babylonian kings, and of Cyrus; Herodotus.

The Captivity.—The Captivity really began more than ten years before the fall of Jerusalem with the deportation of Jehoiachin and his companions. These were more numerous and of a higher type than the exiles who followed them later on. Jeremiah[1] compares the captives who were carried away with Jehoiachin to "good figs, very good," while those left behind at Jerusalem were

[1] Jer. xxiv.

"bad, very bad, that cannot be eaten they are so bad." Thus we may say that even before the fall of the Jewish monarchy, the centre of gravity of Judaism was transferred to Babylonia.

The exiles were for the most part settled together in small communities enjoying considerable rights of local self-government, and were provided with land and other facilities for earning a livelihood. Thus Jeremiah could exhort them, "Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them; marry and bring up families; and let your sons and daughters marry." [1]

Naturally, while the kingdom of Judah still existed these exiles cherished hopes of a speedy return. Recent years had seen a series of startling changes in the international system of the Israelite world, notably the sudden collapse of the old-established power of Assyria, and the temporary revival of the Egyptian dominion in Western Asia. Another turn of the wheel, and Babylon might fall, and a new conqueror might let the exiles go home. In Babylonia, as in Judah, popular preachers encouraged these hopes; and the exiles declared "Yahweh hath raised us up prophets in Babylon." [2] But the expectation of deliverance was premature; Ezekiel, by word of mouth, and Jeremiah, by letter, testified against these men, who prophesied smooth things. The hour of Israel's redemption had not yet come, for "seventy years," two generations, the Exile would continue.

[1] Jer. xxix. 5, 6. [2] Jer. xxix. 15.

The fall of Jerusalem and the final captivity crushed these delusive hopes.

There was no triumphant restoration of Jehoiachin and his companions; but instead there appeared upon the scene another miserable train of Jewish captives, with gruesome tales of the sack of the city, and the desecration and destruction of the Temple. The prophets who promised an immediate deliverance were discredited, while Jeremiah and Ezekiel were vindicated.

After a time the new-comers also settled down to a fairly tolerable mode of existence. Years passed on and brought no striking changes; the new conditions gradually became familiar; regrets for the past and hopes for the future were alike tempered by the necessary routine of everyday life. In time most of the original exiles died, and a generation grew up that had known no other home but Babylonia.

Under similar circumstances the Ten Tribes had lost their nationality and their religion, and become merged in the surrounding heathenism.

Ezekiel.—But the hundred and thirty years since the fall of Samaria had made revealed religion a power in Judah; the work of Isaiah and the prophets of the eighth century and their successors had borne much fruit. Although a majority might be indifferent or hostile, there was an elect remnant of devout souls who held with intelligent conviction to the teaching of the inspired prophets. Moreover, believers could now sustain their

faith by the study of sacred writings; in the records of the preaching of Isaiah and his contemporaries, in the collections of early laws and of narratives concerning the history, and in the first edition of *Deuteronomy*, they had the beginnings of a Bible. Such documents gave a permanent concrete form to religious faith and practice, they afforded some protection against corruption, and could even survive the ruin of the state and the suppression of public worship. Thus when the Jews went into exile, they carried with them an embodiment of their ancient religion, of far more value than altars or golden candlesticks, tabernacle or ark.

These influences from the past were reinforced by the living witness of great prophets, whose interpretation of history enabled the faith in Yahweh to survive the political ruin of Judah. Usually an ancient tribal deity was organically connected with his people and their land; if the people were but torn away from their ancient home and scattered in strange lands, the deity might disappear, or at any rate the people might lose all faith in him, or merely regard him as an inferior being altogether subordinate to the great gods of conquering nations. But the inspired prophets had made the coming ruin of Israel and Judah an article of faith on the part of true believers in Yahweh; He was not a petty deity struggling with and for His people against the overwhelming power of the gods of Assyria and Babylon; He Himself controlled these mighty empires, and used them as the instruments

by which He disciplined Israel. Therefore when the final catastrophe came it was a proof of His might and of the genuine inspiration of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It set the seal of Divine approval upon their messages. Thus, when they announced a coming restoration, the exiles were encouraged to hold together and wait for the fulfilment of the promise.

It was largely through the devoted ministry of Ezekiel that a community of true believers—a Jewish Church—continued to exist in Babylonia. He was a man of wide and varied experience, a member of the Temple priesthood; he had grown up to early manhood at Jerusalem under the influence of Jeremiah; he had been carried away to Babylonia with Jehoiachin, and there probably had married. There, too, he was called to be prophet, and charged with the same message of doom that was committed to Jeremiah. Later on, his own personal grief was mingled with his sorrow for his nation. His wife died during the last days of the siege of Jerusalem, and he was forbidden to mourn for her; the impending catastrophe was too overwhelming to allow men to dwell on private bereavement.

When this crisis was past, Ezekiel set himself anew to the task of building up an elect and purified society fit to take part in the restoration of Israel to its own land and its ancient privileges. He was not merely the prophet with a message for the nation; he was also an assiduous preacher and pastor, winning individuals as citizens of

the near kingdom of God, and continually confirming their faith and loyalty. He also was an ecclesiastic and statesman; and in the last section of his book,[1] after the manner of Eastern seers, he mingles mystical visions of an ideal future with practical suggestions as to the plans for rebuilding of the Temple, and the organisation of its ritual and its priesthood.

The Remnant in Judah.—We must not, however, forget that the Jews in Babylonia were not the whole of Israel.[2] We can defer any special reference to the hybrid population in Samaria; they do not seem to have exercised any great influence on affairs at the beginning of the Exile. But a word must be said about the remnant, mostly of the poorer classes, left behind in Judah. Their fortunes were closely bound up with those of Jeremiah.

After the sack of the city the prophet was taken with other captives to Ramah,[3] and was there released and allowed to go where he pleased. Meanwhile Chaldean authorities had organised Judah as a province under a Jewish governor, Gedaliah, with his capital at Mizpah; and Jeremiah joined him. But as soon as the Chaldean

[1] Ezekiel xl.–xlviii.

[2] From this point the Old Testament practically ignores the Ten Tribes, and speaks of Judah and Benjamin, and such remnants of other tribes as adhered to them, as "Israel." It is convenient to adopt this nomenclature, as it reminds us that for religious purposes the ancient Israel was entirely represented by Judah. The people, however, are usually spoken of as "Jews."

[3] Jer. xl. 1. According to another account, in xxxix. 14, he was taken from his prison at Jerusalem and at once released.

army was gone, a certain Ishmael, of the Jewish royal family, treacherously assassinated Gedaliah with his Jewish followers, and the Chaldean officials at Mizpah and their escort. Ishmael then fled to the king of Ammon with a train of captives. He was pursued, however, by a Jewish general, Johanan, and compelled to surrender his prisoners.

Johanan and his officers feared to remain in Palestine; the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar was not likely to discriminate between innocent and guilty. Accordingly the Jewish remnant, in spite of the protests of Jeremiah, fled into Egypt. Our last record of the prophet describes a characteristic scene. Many of the Jews, more especially the women, attributed the ruin of Judah to the abandonment of the worship of the Queen of Heaven, the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. On their arrival in Egypt, they resumed this cult and that of other heathen gods. Jeremiah denounced them in a great public assembly, and was met with open defiance. Thus he ends[1] as he began, a solitary figure, bearing his testimony in the face of a hostile people, and uttering fierce threats of coming doom.

How far these were fulfilled we cannot tell; these Jewish immigrants may have perished as he foretold. Later on we find Jewish communities in Egypt;[2] but it

[1] As far as the Old Testament is concerned. According to one legend, the scene we have been describing ended in the stoning to death of Jeremiah; according to others, he died in Babylonia or Palestine.

[2] *e.g.* at Elephantine; see the papyri recently discovered there.

is not certain that they had any connection with Johanan's followers.

As for Judah, probably in spite of this flight to Egypt, and the repeated deportations to Babylonia, a remnant gathered about their old homes; and throughout the Exile, a feeble and impoverished community maintained itself about Jerusalem and in the northern highlands of Judah.

The Second Isaiah.—For a time the Jews, whether in Babylonia or elsewhere, acquiesced in the new order; there was no immediate prospect of change. Some fell away into heathenism, and were lost to Israel. Those who remained loyal were the more earnest and spiritually minded, so that the religion of Yahweh was increasingly identified with *Deuteronomy* and with the teaching of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Their doctrine of the minor importance of ritual was illustrated and enforced by the fact that the exiles maintained an intense religious life without Temple or sacrifice. The devout energy which could not find an outlet in the affairs of State or Temple was largely devoted to literature. The records of ancient folklore and tradition; of history, law, custom, and ritual; and of prophetic teaching, were carefully studied, copied and re-copied, edited and supplemented. With the hope of a restoration ever before their eyes, men were anxious to preserve the knowledge of the old Israel so that the new Israel might be constituted according to time-honoured use and wont. Much that had hitherto been matter of oral tradition and current habit would

now be committed to writing, *e.g.* the arrangements and rites of the Temple.

But the Exile also had an original literature of its own, some of which has survived. For the purposes of the general history, the most important document is Isaiah xl.–lv., often spoken of as the "Second Isaiah."[1] This work expresses the hopes of faithful Jews towards the close of the Exile. To understand these we must revert for a moment to the international situation created by the fall of Assyria.[2] That event was the work of a confederacy, and no one of the confederates succeeded to the unquestioned supremacy over Western Asia enjoyed for long periods by Assyria. For many years the authority of Babylon was sustained by the personal ability of Nebuchadnezzar; but to the east his allies the Medes formed a powerful state, and the strength of Egypt was still unbroken. In Asia Minor an important kingdom of Lydia had arisen under Crœsus. On the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon declined rapidly; but its overthrow was not due to Egypt, Media, or Lydia.

There arose at this time one of those great personalities who change the course of history—Cyrus, at first a petty king of Anzan and Persia.[3] From this

[1] *Cf.* the volume in this series on the "Books of the Old Testament."

[2] *Cf.* p. 141.

[3] The early history of Cyrus is matter of great controversy; possibly Persia was not part of his original dominions, but one of his acquisitions.

subordinate position, he pursued his victorious career till he became master of Western Asia. His success was not wholly due to force. He had a gift of winning affection and rousing enthusiasm; his character and his policy appealed to nationalities and classes oppressed by the monarchs with whom he contended, so that men hailed him as a deliverer. Thus in quick succession he added Media and Lydia to his dominions.

Like other subject peoples, the Jews watched with kindling hopes the career of this great conqueror. As empire after empire fell before him, men felt that surely this was a day of Yahweh. What, then, would the God of Israel do for His people? As of old, Yahweh made known His purpose by a prophet, whose name has been forgotten, but whose teaching is recorded in Isaiah xl.–lv. This unknown seer hailed Cyrus as the Shepherd of Yahweh, the divinely appointed king, the Anointed[1] of Yahweh, by Whose grace he ruled and conquered. He would soon add the Chaldean empire to his conquests; and then he would send the Jews back to Palestine, to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple; a new era of peace and righteousness and prosperity would begin for Israel.

[1] *Māshiah*, our "Messiah"; Isa. xliv. 28, xlv. 1.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RESTORATION [1]

	c. B.C.
Cyrus takes Babylon	539
Return of the Jews	538
Cambyses, king of Persia	529
Persian Conquest of Egypt	525
Darius I. (Hystaspes)	521
Haggai and Zechariah	
The Rebuilding of the Temple	516–520

EZRA I.–VI., HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH

Extra-Biblical Authorities.

Josephus, Herodotus

The Return.—At last Cyrus turned his victorious arms against the Chaldeans; he defeated the forces which opposed him in the open field; Babylon surrendered without resistance, and thus the last great empire of Western Asia became part of his dominions, and henceforth the Persian monarchs included amongst their other titles that of "King of Babylon." It was the policy of Cyrus to extend a sympathetic toleration to the religions of subject peoples, and in pursuance of that policy a large number of the Jewish exiles were allowed to return to Judah under the leadership of the

[1] See Appendix I.

Davidic prince, Zerubbabel,[1] a grandson of Jehoiachin, and the priest Joshua. They were to settle in Judah, and to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, and they carried with them the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away.

The Samaritans.—When Zerubbabel and Joshua arrived in Judah, they found that they had a difficult task before them. They may have met with some measure of welcome and assistance from the feeble remnant of Jews which still maintained a precarious existence in the highlands of Judah. But the neighbouring tribes had looked upon themselves as the heirs to the derelict inheritance of Israel; if Jerusalem again became a powerful and prosperous city and a strong fortress, it might prove to be the nucleus of a new Jewish state, that would successfully assert its claims to the ancient dominion of Israel. Such claims would be most inconvenient: the Edomites had occupied the south of Judah; eastern Palestine was in the hands of Ammonites, Moabites, and Arabians; while the territory of the old tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh was occupied by the hybrid population who came to be called Samaritans. These last presented a special difficulty; they were

[1] In Ezra i. 8, 11, v. 14, 16, we read of a Sheshbazzar who took a leading part in the Return. He has sometimes been identified with Zerubbabel, and sometimes supposed to have been a Persian official or a Jewish prince associated with Zerubbabel in this mission. In any case the secular headship of the restored community was soon entrusted to Zerubbabel.

partly of Israelite blood, and had adopted the worship of Yahweh. If any prestige or privilege was to be gained by being the representatives of ancient Israel, the Samaritans felt that it ought to belong to them, or at any rate that they should obtain the lion's share. Probably the Jewish remnant left in the land had become dependent on these Northern kinsfolk. On the other hand, the exiles who had returned from Babylon were determined to reserve the religious and secular rights of Israel exclusively to themselves and their fellow Jews. Quite apart from selfish motives, there were very valid reasons for such a policy. At this time the Samaritans worshipped Yahweh after the corrupt fashion of the unreformed religion of ancient times; they still tolerated the abuses denounced by Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. Their service to the God of Israel was tainted by heathen superstitions, and combined with the worship of foreign gods; it fell far short of the ethical and spiritual standard reached by the Babylonian Jews, who had remained loyal to the faith of their fathers.

It was clear that the new-comers would not be long in Judah before they had trouble with their neighbours. The authority of the Persian government enabled the Jews to make good their footing at Jerusalem, to provide themselves with dwellings, to arrange for the cultivation of the land, to organise the restored community, and to provide for the revival of the national worship by erecting an altar to Yahweh. But after the settlement

was established, it was left very much to itself, and had to rely upon its limited resources to hold its own. In the great empires of the ancient East, in the absence of railways and telegraphs, the central government often had little control over distant provinces, and was mostly satisfied if the revenues were paid punctually. Matters were in the hands of local governors. In this case no Persian official was specially responsible for the welfare of the Jews.[1] The neighbouring districts were for the most part under native authorities, hostile to the returned exiles, but more or less subordinate to representatives of the Persian king.

In the year after the Return, the Jewish community set about rebuilding the Temple. In the first instance, the foundation was laid amidst great rejoicing; but here matters stopped for a time. For at this stage the Samaritans demanded a share in the work, and, when this was refused, they "weakened the hands of the people of Judah and harassed them in their building." Thus, partly by direct interference, partly by representations to the Persian authorities, they succeeded in "frustrating the purpose"[2] of the Jews for nearly twenty years.

The Rebuilding of the Temple: Haggai and Zechariah.—The forces of nature were equally unkind, for the immi-

[1] At any rate after Sheshbazzar was no longer on the scene; *cf.* note on page 161.

[2] Ezra iv. 4, 5.

grants had to wrestle with a series of inclement seasons. Their depression was deepened by the contrast between their unhappy conditions and the exalted anticipations with which they had returned to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. The glowing pictures of Isaiah xl.–lv. seemed to mock their forlorn estate.

The Jews would find new cause for anxiety in the death of their patron Cyrus, and the troublous times of his successor Cambyses. Life became a dull routine, wherein the present necessities were barely provided for and no energy was left for any great enterprise.

From this lethargy the Jews were roused by the excitement due to the revolutions which followed the death of Cambyses, and by the establishment of a new dynasty under Darius I. (Hystaspes). As at the time of the fall of Nineveh, and again at the fall of Babylon, a great political crisis seemed to have arisen. An uncertain, restless spirit was abroad. Surely this also was a day of Yahweh, when He would intervene on behalf of His people. At Jerusalem two prophets stood forth, Haggai and Zechariah, and in response to their appeals and promises, Zerubbabel and Joshua resumed the building of the Temple. The neighbouring tribes also renewed their opposition, but an appeal to the Persian government resulted in a decision in favour of the Jews, and the Temple was completed.

At this point a veil falls upon the history for about sixty years. Probably the immediate sequel of the re-

building of the Temple was as disappointing as the years following the Return. Haggai and Zechariah had made large promises. They had at least suggested that Judah should not be merely an insignificant province of the Persian empire, but should become a powerful independent state under Zerubbabel as king. It is often supposed that Zerubbabel was led into conduct that drew down upon him the wrath of the Persians, and brought about his deposition, or even his death. At any rate, the Jews were very far from attaining to the perfect loyalty to Yahweh and the boundless prosperity which Haggai and Zechariah had promised.

CHAPTER XVII

THE REFORMS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH[1]

	B.C.
Xerxes, king of Persia (Ahasuerus[2] of Ezra iv. 6 and of Esther)	485
Artaxerxes I.[3] (Longimanus, king of Persia, Ezra iv. 7–23, vi. 14, vii., Nehemiah viii.)	465
Malachi	*c.* 460
The Mission of Ezra	458
First Mission of Nehemiah	445–434
Second Mission of Nehemiah	432
Darius II. (Nothus), king of Persia	423

EZRA, NEHEMIAH (INCLUDING MEMOIRS WRITTEN BY EZRA AND NEHEMIAH RESPECTIVELY), MALACHI, ISAIAH LVI.–LXVI., PSALMS II.–XLI.

Extra-Biblical Authority.—Josephus.

The Jews in Babylonia.—The little community in and about Jerusalem was only a small portion of the Jewish people, and not the most important. There were Jews scattered about the East and in Egypt, but the communities in Babylonia were still the most numerous, wealthy, and influential. But for their repeated intervention, both political and ecclesiastical, the colony in Judah would have been merged in the surrounding heathenism. A number of priestly families still remained in Chaldea, and some of them, following in the

[1] *Cf.* Appendix II. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

footsteps of Ezekiel, were occupied in editing, revising, and expanding the various codes of ritual laws. Ultimately many of these were combined into a new edition of the early history and the laws, which is usually spoken of as the Priestly Code.[1]

Malachi.—Meanwhile in Judæa the high hopes excited by Haggai and Zechariah had been followed by a disappointment which led to reaction and depression. The building of the Temple did not secure prosperity and freedom for the Jews. Men's interest in the services flagged; even the priests became careless and perfunctory in the conduct of public worship, and used their authority for mercenary and partisan purposes. The nobles, including some of the chief members of the priesthood, cultivated friendly relations with the leaders of the Samaritans and other neighbouring tribes; and Jews lay and secular, of all ranks, intermarried freely with heathen or half-heathen wives. The natural result was the cooling of zeal for the pure worship of Yahweh, and a fresh outbreak of corrupt superstition. Nevertheless there was still a party who clung tenaciously to higher ideals; their protests against the prevailing laxity of religion and morals are partly preserved to us in Malachi, Isaiah lvi.–lxvi., and some of the Psalms.[2]

[1] The extant portions of this work now constitute large parts of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, and *Numbers*, and the whole of *Leviticus*.

[2] The exact dates of all these documents are matters of controversy, but in every case they represent the spirit and temper of the loyal Jews in this period.

The Mission of Ezra.—Left to themselves, however, the true believers might have succumbed to the powerful influences arrayed against them; but the Jews in Babylonia watched with anxious interest the progress of affairs in Judæa, and rendered decisive help at the critical moment. Possibly the Priestly Code was compiled to meet this emergency.

Towards the beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes I., a certain priest named Ezra, doubtless as the representative of the priests and other Babylonian Jews, and with the permission of the Persian government, organised a second migration to Judæa. He collected some 1500 exiles—men, women and children—and led them across the desert to Jerusalem.

In Ezra we have the first prominent representative of a new class—the scribes, or students, teachers, and expounders of the Torah or Pentateuchal Law. He went on his journey, we are told, with "the wisdom of God in his hand,"[1] and we may safely conclude that the Priestly Code was a leading feature of that wisdom, and that Ezra's main object was to reform and regulate the religious life of the Jewish community according to that code.

Notwithstanding his numerous followers, his adherents at Jerusalem, and the support of the Persian government, Ezra had little success. He directed his efforts chiefly against the practice of intermarrying with foreigners.

[1] Ezra vii. 25.

He was not content with forbidding such marriages for the future, but tried to compel all those who had formed such alliances to divorce their wives. For the time being, at any rate, he failed.

The First Mission of Nehemiah.—Doubtless Ezra rendered some service to the cause of religion in Jerusalem; but for him the growth of corruption might have been more rapid than it was. On the whole, however, things went from bad to worse. Whether through neglect to repair the breaches made by Nebuchadnezzar, or through some new disaster, the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins, and the city lay at the mercy of its enemies. Great distress prevailed among the people, and social abuses reappeared which had been denounced by Amos and Isaiah. The nobles took advantage of the necessities of the farmers to appropriate their land and reduce many of them to slavery.

But at this time, by the Divine providence, Ezra and his friends had a powerful advocate at the Persian court. A Jew, Nehemiah ben Hachaliah, was cup-bearer to the king, and could thus obtain a favourable hearing for a petition. Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, came from Jerusalem to Susa, and reported to him the desperate straits to which the Jewish community was reduced. For a while Nehemiah gave himself to fasting and prayer, and then obtained from the king the governorship of Judah, with express authority to fortify Jerusalem. He then set out for Judah with a strong escort of Persian

cavalry. On his arrival, his first care was to secure his military position against the Samaritan chiefs. Before Sanballat and Tobiah had properly grasped the situation, Nehemiah had rallied the Jews to a well-organised, sustained, and strenuous effort to rebuild the walls of the city—with such success that, when the Samaritan forces appeared upon the scene, they were compelled to retreat without effecting anything. Sanballat and his supporters then had recourse to treachery; they tried to entice Nehemiah to a conference, doubtless with the intention of assassinating him; but he declined to walk into the trap. "I am doing a great work," said he, "I cannot come down."[1] The Jewish opponents of Ezra did what they could to help their Samaritan friends; and the latter bribed the prophets, male and female, to bid Nehemiah in the name of Yahweh to give up his work and take sanctuary in the Temple. But Nehemiah scornfully ignored the admonitions of these hireling clerics; being a man of much practical common sense, "he discerned that God had not sent them."[2] So he persevered, and the walls were finished.

Nehemiah next turned his attention to the social trouble, and compelled the nobles to disgorge their plunder, and give back the land to its former owners, so that the common people again had a chance of earning a decent livelihood.

[1] Nehemiah vi. 3, 12.
[2] Ibid.

Matters were now entirely changed from the time when Ezra made his futile attempts at reform. The new walls protected the city from any sudden attack, and cut off the aristocratic party, lay and clerical, from their Samaritan allies; while the social reform secured Nehemiah the adherence of the bulk of the people. Thus strengthened against enemies at home or abroad, Nehemiah could introduce religious reforms. A solemn assembly was called, and Ezra came forward with "the Book of the Law,"[1] which he read in public. The reading and expounding went on for seven days, and was followed by the Feast of Tabernacles. Later on, the supporters of Ezra and Nehemiah, "all they that had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God,"[2] entered into a solemn covenant to observe the Law. Amongst other things they undertook not to intermarry with foreigners, but we do not gather that at this time Nehemiah insisted on divorcing foreign wives.

Nehemiah spent twelve years at Jerusalem as governor of Judah; he reorganised the community, and made provision for the maintenance of the Temple worship. Then he returned to the Persian court.

As soon as his back was turned, the priests and nobles regained their ascendency; went back to their old evil ways, and resumed their friendly relations with

[1] Either the Priestly Code or some larger portion of the Pentateuch, including *Deuteronomy*.

[2] Neh. x. 28.

the Samaritans. More especially Eliashib, the high priest, was hand in glove with Nehemiah's two chief opponents, Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite. He installed Tobiah in a "great chamber" in the Temple, and married his grandson to Sanballat's daughter. The Temple services were again neglected; the Temple dues were not paid; the Sabbath became a sort of market-day. Back came Nehemiah, and made short work of these abominations; he bundled Tobiah and his belongings out of the Temple, and cleansed the great chamber; he suppressed the Sabbath trading; he chased away Sanballat's son-in-law. Also finding Jews with foreign wives, whose children could not speak their own language, to use his own picturesque words, "I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear to God, saying, 'Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves.'"[1]

Having remedied these abuses, he restored his former arrangements for the maintenance of the Temple worship.

The Value of the Work of Ezra and Nehemiah.—But for some such intervention as that of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jewish community at Jerusalem would have lost its racial and religious characteristics. It would have been merged in an omnium-gatherum of Moabites, Ammonites, Arabians, and Samaritans, with a hybrid religion, which

[1] Neh. xiii. 25.

used the authority of Yahweh to support corrupt and immoral superstition. In such a society the faith in revealed religion would have dwindled and died. Doubtless there would still have been believers in Babylonia, but the subsequent history of these Eastern Jews does not suggest that, humanly speaking, their Judaism could have afforded a starting-point for Christianity. Ezra and Nehemiah were the divinely appointed agents who secured the continuous development of revealed religion.

It was through them that orthodox Judaism became a religion with a single place of sacrifice, the Temple, with an elaborate ceremonial law controlling not only public worship but daily life, with an exalted morality, with a spiritual monotheism, and with sacred writings which enforced, explained, and illustrated this teaching. Moreover Ezra and Nehemiah practically founded a society of earnest and devout believers who preserved and transmitted the Law and the Prophets, and kept alive a burning zeal for the true worship of the God of Israel.

Incidentally their work had another result. They gave effect to the refusal to allow the Samaritans to share the religious privileges of Israel. Whereupon the Samaritans, having in Sanballat's son-in-law a priest of the house of Aaron,[1] built their own Temple to Yahweh on Mount Gerizim, and organised themselves as the true successors of ancient Israel, with the Samaritan edition of the Law.

[1] But *cf.* Appendix II.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

	B.C.
Judæa a province of the Persian empire . .	538–333
Judæa under Greek dominion	333–167
Antiochus IV. (Epiphanes), king of Syria . .	175–164
The War of Independence under the Maccabees .	167 142
Judæa independent under the Maccabean princes .	142 41
Judæa under the Herods	41–A.D. 6
Judæa a Roman province	. A.D. 6

An Old Testament History naturally ends with the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, and we need only sketch very briefly the course of subsequent events. The work of the reformers remained; it is true that there was always a party which disapproved of any undue enthusiasm for the Law; but its zealous champions always constituted a formidable body, and successfully asserted their claim to be the true representatives of the religion and of the national hopes, aspirations, and ideals of the Jews. For another three hundred years, the political status of the Jews underwent little change; the Babylonian Jews still flourished in subject communities; and Judæa continued a province of a great Eastern empire. The conquests of Alexander transferred the dominion of Western Asia and Egypt from the Persians to the Greeks, and Judæa became a bone of contention between Egyptian Ptolemies and the Seleucid kings of Syria—sometimes subject to the one, sometimes to the other. Ultimately the efforts of Antiochus IV. to promote Greek civilisa-

tion throughout his dominions provoked a determined revolt, and Judæa regained its independence under the Maccabeans, at once high priests and kings. But this new-found liberty hardly lasted a century; Judæa fell under the power of Rome, first as represented by her henchmen the Herods, and then under actual Roman governors.

But in these last centuries before the coming of Christ, Jews were dispersed throughout the known world; the communities in Babylonia and Judæa grew and flourished; the Jews occupied Galilee; and new centres were formed —notably at Alexandria. And this Dispersion, unlike that of the Ten Tribes, remained loyal to its people and its religion. Everywhere the Jews had their synagogues and their Scriptures; they kept the Sabbath, and studied and observed the Law.

At the same time Jewish culture widened; not only was the Law expounded and elaborated, but the *Book of Daniel* and many similar apocalypses expressed an interpretation of the history of the past and an assured hope for the future; while at Alexandria and elsewhere learned Jewish thinkers like Philo and the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* sought to use the achievements of the Greek intellect in the service of revealed religion. In many ways, and at many different points, action and reaction were going on between Judaism and the two great forces which were making for unity in the ancient world—Greek civilisation and the Roman genius for government. It was reserved for Christianity to co-ordinate the three under the authority of an universal religion.

APPENDIX I

THE RETURN FROM THE EXILE

CHAPTER XV. follows the opening sections of *Ezra*. Doubts, however, have been cast on the accuracy of this account of the events immediately following the fall of Babylon, mainly because there is no reference to such events in *Haggai* and *Zechariah*. Accordingly it is held by some scholars that there was no Return on any large scale in or about B.C. 536; and that there was no attempt to rebuild the Temple before B.C. 520; and that the Temple was rebuilt by the remnant who had been left in Judah, and not by exiles who had returned from Babylon. But these revolutionary views are only advocated by a minority, although most critics agree that the story in *Ezra* should be corrected in some particulars. Such corrections, however, would not seriously affect the outline given in Chapter XV.

APPENDIX II

THE REFORMS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

These also are the subject of much controversy, and as the matter is still *sub judice*, I have thought it right to follow in the text substantially the account of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, which is still accepted by many scholars in its main features. Apart from a few extremists, who challenge the historicity of Ezra and his mission, the facts are for the most part accepted; but there is a great variety of opinion as to the chronology. The mission of Ezra is sometimes placed before, sometimes at the same time as, the first mission of Nehemiah; sometimes between Nehemiah's two visits to Jerusalem, sometimes after the second visit.

Also the Artaxerxes of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* is sometimes identified with Artaxerxes II. (Mnemon), B.C. 404–361.

Again, the formation of the Samaritan sect is sometimes assigned to a later date.

INDEX

AARON, 32
Abijam, 93
Abimelech, 44, 46
Abner, 73
Abraham, 18, 33
Absalom, 76
Achish, 72
Adonijah, 77
Ahab, 97
Ahaz, 129
Ahaziah of Israel, 101
,, of Judah, 106
Alexander, 174
Amalekites, 32, 67
Amarna tablets, 36
Amaziah, 114
Ammon, 20, 63
Amon, 134
Amorites, 37
Amos, 122
Amraphel, 10, 117
Antiochus, 175
Aramæans, *see* Syria
Ark, 31, 58
Artaxerxes, 166, 177
Asa, 93
Asshurbanipal, 134
Assyria, 10, 99
Athaliah, 109

BAAL, 52, 102, 108
Baasha, 93
Babylon, 10
,, suzerainty of, 141
Barak, 44
Baruch, 140, 144
Benhadad, 94
Benjamin, 41
Bondage in Egypt, 22
Brazen serpent, 132

CALEB, 40
Calves, golden, 90
Canaan, before Conquest, 16
,, Conquest of, 35
Captivity of Israel, 126
,, of Jehoiachin, 146
,, of Judah, 149
Carchemish, battle of, 141
Century Bible, 7
Chronicles, 4, 5
Chronology, 33, 53, 90
Conquest of Canaan, 35
Corvée, 80
Covenant, Book of, 115
Cyrus, 158

DAMASCUS, 10, 93
Dan, 40
Daniel, 175
Darius, 164
David, 71
Day of Yahweh, 159
Deborah, 44
Deuteronomy, 135
Dispersion, 166, 174
Disruption, 88

EASTERN Palestine, conquest of, 37
Edom, 19, 20, 78
Egypt, 9, 126
,, bondage in, 22
,, suzerainty of, 138
Ehud, 44
Elah, 94
Elephantine papyri, 156
Eli, 57
Elijah, 101
Elisha, 101, 113
Eltekeh, battle of, 131
Ephraim, 41
Esarhaddon, 133
Esau, 20
Exile, 150
Exodus, the, 27
,, date of the, 34
Ezekiel, 152
Ezra, 169, 178

GEDALIAH, 155

Genealogy of Israel, 17
Geography of the ancient East, 8
,, of Palestine, 13
Gideon, 44, 46
Gilboa, battle of, 69
Golden calves, 90

HABAKKUK, 139
Haggai, 163
Hammurabi, 10, 117
Haran, 20
Hazael, 112
Herods, 175
Hezekiah, 130
High places, 118, 136
History of Israel—
importance of, 1
interpretation of sources of, 4
sources of, 3
Hittites, 11
Horeb, 26, 28
Hosea, 122
Hoshea, 126
Hyksos, 23

INSCRIPTIONS, 3
International Critical Commentary, 7
Isaac, 19
Isaiah, 127
,, "Second," 157
,, lvi.–lxvi., 166 f.
Ishbaal, 73
Ishmael, 23
Israel, genealogy of, 17

JABESH-GILEAD, 63
Jacob, 17, 20
Jael, 46
Jehoahaz of Israel, 112
Jehoahaz of Judah, 138
Jehoash, 113
Jehoiachin, 146
Jehoiada, 109
Jehoiakim, 138, 142
Jehonadab, 108
Jehoram of Israel, 98, 101
,, of Judah, 98, 106
Jehoshaphat, 98
Jehovah, 26
Jehu, 106
Jephthah, 44
Jeremiah, 139
Jericho, 38
Jeroboam I., 91
,, II., 113
Jerusalem taken by David, 76
,, taken by Nebuchadnezzar, 149
Jezebel, 99
Joab, 73
Joash, 109
Jonah, 113
Jonathan, 66
Joram, *see* Jehoram
Joseph, 18, 23
Josephus, 3
Joshua, 35
,, High Priest, 161
Josiah, 135
Jotham, 129
Judah, 40
Judges, 43

KADESH, 28
Karkar, battle of, 100
Kenites, 40
Khuenaten, 13

Lamentations, 149
Law, 31, 135, 169
Levites, 39
Lot, 19

MACCABEES, 175
Malachi, 167
Manasseh, King, 41
,, Tribe, 133
Medes, 141, 158
Megiddo, battle of, 137
Menahem, 125
Menephthah *or* Mereptah, 34
Mephibosheth *or* Merribbaal, son of Jonathan, 81
Merodach-Baladan, 130
Mesha, 96, 105
Micah, 127
Midian, 26, 46
Moab, 20, 96, 105
Moabite Stone, 96, 105
Monarchy, rise of, 48, 61
Monuments, 3
Moses, 25

NABOTH, 97
Nahash, 63
Nahum, 139
Nebuchadnezzar, 141
Necho, 137
Nehemiah, 169, 178
Nineveh, fall of, 141

OMRI, 94

PALESTINE, geography of, 13
,, early history, 16
Papyri, 156
Patriarchs, 18
Peake, *Religion of Israel*, 6
Pekah, 126

Pekahiah, 126
Pentateuch, 17, 135, 167
Pharaoh of Exodus, 34
,, of Oppression, 34
,, Necho, 137
Philistines, 54, 65, 75
Philo, 175
Pithom, 24
Plagues, Ten, 27
Priestly Code, 167
Prophets, 60, 113
Psalms, 167

RAAMSES, 24
Ramoth-gilead, 101
Rameses II., 34
Red Sea, 28
Rehoboam, 91
Religion of Israel, 6, 21, 51, 78, 85, 90, 118
Return, 160, 176
Reuben, 41
Rezin, 126

SAMARIA, capital, 96
,, fall of, 125
Samaritans, 161, 173
Samson, 44, 56
Samuel, 59
Samuel, 54
Sanballat, 170
Sargon, 130
Saul, 61
Sennacherib, 128
Serpent, brazen, 132
Shalmaneser II., 100, 107
Shechem, 39
Sheshbazzar, 161
Shishak, 91
Simeon, 39
Sinai, 26, 28
Smith, H. P., *Old Testament History*, 7
Social conditions, 50, 116, 120
Solomon, 82
Spirit of Yahweh, 58, 63
Syria, 10, 96, 99, 111
Suzerainty of Egypt, 138
,, of Babylon, 141

TABERNACLE, 31
Temple, Solomon's, 84
,, restored, 163
Ten plagues, 27
,, Tribes, revolt of, 88
Tent of Meeting, 31
Thothmes III., inscription of, 36
Tibni, 96
Twelve Tribes, 18

UR, 19
Uzziah, 128

WHITEHOUSE, *Books of the Old Testament*, 7
Wilderness wanderings, 32
Wisdom of Solomon, 175

YAHWEH, 26, 29

ZACHARIAH, 125
Zechariah, 163
Zedekiah, 146
Zephaniah, 139
Zerubbabel, 161
Zimri, 94

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